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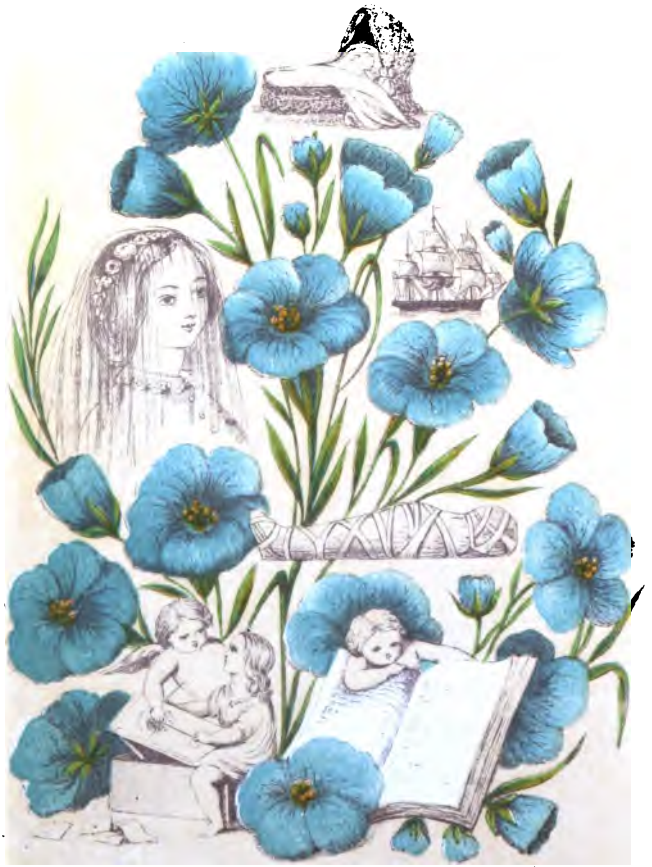
THE FAIRY TREE.



Little Flax.

SEE "STORY OF THE PAPER FLOWER." —PAGE 190.

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THE FAIRY TREE;

OR,

Stories from Far and Near.

BY

I. T. A.

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THE FAIRY TREE.

I.

THE SISTERS AND THE TREE.

"Now, Ida, now!" exclaimed a pretty little fair-haired girl just four years old, clapping her tiny hands in ecstasy as the last coloured lamp was attached by her elder sister to a magnificent Christmas Tree, "shall I help you to light the lamps and tapers?" As she spoke, little Josephine rushed to the blazing fire with a twisted paper she had long held ready in her hand.

"No, little goosie," said Ida, at the same moment springing towards her sister. "It is only just four o'clock; we do not dine till seven, and it will be quite nine o'clock (shall you be able to keep awake, I wonder) before all the company arrive; so, if we lighted those pretty lamps now, they would all be burned

out before any one came to see our Tree. Is it not a beauty, little Zeff?" exclaimed her sister, catching her in her arms, and holding her up as high as her strength would allow. "And now, pussie, we will be off, for I have a thousand and one things to do. I will lock the door and give the key to Saunders, for her to look after the fire. And, my pet, never attempt to light anything yourself. Had I not been in the room to keep you back, your frock would have been in a blaze in a moment, and oh! what a sorrowful Christmas this would have been to us! I have heard such sad stories of little girls, and grown women too, being burned to death in lighting Christmas Trees."

"Burned to death!—oh, Ida!" and the wee maiden shuddered as she hid her saddened little face on her sister's shoulder. "Will you tell me one of the true stories about it? and look, I'll throw away my lighter, and I won't ask to do it again till I am a big girl like you."

The little one held up her rosy mouth to be kissed as a seal of forgiveness, and the loving young sisters left the room. As she was shutting the door, Zeffie put her pretty

head back for an instant, for a last look and word.

"Good-bye, pretty things, till I see you again;" and the door finally closed.

The door closed, and, now that human voices had died away, it seemed as if the inanimate things they had left behind were suddenly endowed with speech, for instantly there arose a confused hum of voices.

The loudest of these issued from the great Christmas fire. It was as if the coals, glowing with eagerness, were relating their strange history and adventures to the huge log of wood that burned beside them. Some of these adventures must have been very amusing, or at least they were amusingly told, for every now and then an explosive noise was heard, as if the great wooden log could not contain his laughter. He, too, must have had an eventful life; but it was evident, by the continuous crackling of the coals, that they took the largest share of the conversation. But, not caring to talk so much himself, the log made all the better listener. So the old friends, who were indeed relations, though

perhaps they did not know it, merrily burned away together on the cheery Christmas eve.

Whatever may have been their past experiences—the deep, dark mine where the Coal had been shut up for centuries, only exchanged for the dirty collier's stifling hold; and the Fir-tree's reminiscences of the great forest, whence the leaping waters of a broad bright stream had carried him seawards, to be arrested at a noisy timber-yard, and consigned in his turn to the hold of a merchant vessel—it was certain at least that for the latter days of both, fate had reserved a brilliant destiny.

It were scarcely possible for wood and coals to accomplish the end of their being more happily. And it would seem as if the good old things knew it and were grateful; for, even while they crackled and laughed together without intermission, their bright rays were ever kindly and merrily gleaming into every corner of the apartment, which it was their pleasant duty to make warm and cheerful.

It was such a pretty room, the school-room of Seacombe Manor-house—so unlike the scene that word usually conjures before us! However large and airy they may be, school-

rooms, both public and private, are generally somewhat cheerless, being bare of furniture, except of such articles as may be termed strictly professional. Maps against the walls, benches or stiff upright chairs ranged beside them, globes, writing-desks, books in cold, cheerless covers, and (if a girls' school-room) a jingling piano, complete the stern inventory. Very often are they carpetless and curtainless; and better so than with the faded, melancholy-looking things which oppress the spirits with their aspect of weariness, worn out, as they have been, with the sad experiences of their long, hard lives.

See, now, the school-room of Seacombe Manor. All is fresh, and bright, and cheery-looking. One's first sensation on entering was that of breathing a rose-coloured atmosphere. It was the prevailing colour throughout. Roses twined with convolvuli up the chintz curtains; and from the carpet roses looked up behind broad masses of feathery fern-leaves. Book-cases, with long rows of cheerfully-attired books, covered the walls, except on the space exactly facing the centre window, which was unusually large. There a looking-glass,

magnificent as to size, but simply framed, gave the finishing charm to the apartment. Without it there would have been prettiness, but with it there was beauty; for on its dazzling surface lay a picture matchless indeed, reflecting, as it did, the work of an Almighty hand —the scene without, mid-winter though it was, supremely beautiful.

The kingly Sun had set, but the edge of his royal mantle swept the horizon still, gleaming with crimson and with gold. Against the radiant sky the irregular outline of some detached and far-distant hills to the right glowed like a broken chain of amethysts. Next to them came a broad shadow, soft and undefined —brown forests and purple plains; and, nearer still, a shimmering silver line, which ever widened and brightened towards the left, till it met the horizon, and there, partaking of its glorious hues, spread out a broad, bright sea of ruddy molten gold.

On the nearest shore of the shining waters tall and majestic trees arose; but the Ice-King kept his court without, and the nobles of the forest wore plumed coronals and white mantles sparkling with many-coloured gems. The very

ground beneath was lavishly strewn with jewels.

A fairy-like scene within and without! The rich red light that flushed the sky and the sea, and streamed in upon the mirror that reflected them, shed a peculiar brightness on a large Fir-tree which occupied the centre of the room. Its green branches, hung with coloured Lamps, looked like one of Alladin's trees clustered with jewelled fruit, while countless gifts of great beauty and value, and of infinite variety, were not only suspended to the magic Fir-tree's boughs, but were also disposed on various tables surrounding it.

The hum of voices continued. It was evident that the "pretty things" to which little Josephine had so unwillingly said "good-bye" had much to say to each other ere the time arrived at which their separation would take place.

"I confess I could have wished that the little girl's desire had been gratified, if only for a few moments," said, with rather a grand air, one of the larger amber-coloured Lamps that encircled the Tree; "for, dear friends,

until *we* are lighted, a Christmas Tree produces no effect. This you must yourselves confess. Up to that time, indeed, I should think you must scarcely be distinguishable."

"Pardon me, I am not at all of your opinion," haughtily replied a Banner-screen, richly embroidered with the arms of the family.

"Really you think so!" contemptuously drawled forth a very fine lady Doll, whose dress of mauve and silver, extended by a steel petticoat to a prodigious size, was of no small inconvenience to her nearest neighbours.

"Oh, indeed!" pertly ejaculated a buckhorn-handled Clasp-knife, snapping one of his blades with a saucy, defiant air.

"I never heard such nonsense; I wonder you are not ashamed," indignantly exclaimed a large Travelling-bag, whose innumerable articles of every imaginable kind, for every possible use, all arranged in the most perfect order, gave one the impression of a large and wealthy household, —the children of the family represented by the pretty little nick-knacks, the servants by the various implements for use—a model establishment, nothing wanting, no one absent or out of

place, the whole presided over by an admirable but strict mistress, the portly Bag herself.

But what this commanding-looking individual meant to have added to her remark was lost to the world; for, as the disparaging observation of the ridiculously consequential Lamp was repeated from mouth to mouth, the hubbub increased, till at last the various angry and scoffing replies were not always intelligible. On the noise subsiding a little, three voices were again distinguishable.

One was that of a pretty ladylike sandal-wood Work-box, who was attempting, in mild accents, to remonstrate with her neighbours.

"Nay, surely quite enough has been said on the matter. The poor creature has been punished sufficiently, for he must be almost deafened with this terrible noise."

"Pooh, pooh! deafened indeed! serve him right if it made him dumb also," angrily growled forth an old gentleman's Walking-stick. "Never heard such impertinence—never! I think the fellow must have been drinking!"

"What nonthenth thothe low-born creatures

alwayth do talk!" affectedly lisped the Amber Mouthpiece of a costly Meerschaum.

Meanwhile, it almost appeared as if the unfortunate wish which, so ungraciously expressed, had caused all this tumult, had actually been gratified, and that the amber-coloured Lamp himself at least had been kindled; for from within the glass globe a continued sputtering noise was heard,—it was not, however, the effect of fire, but of the hot water in which he so suddenly found himself.

When at last he could make himself heard, he was in such a rage he could scarcely articulate. Poor fellow, rude and conceited as he was, it was impossible not to feel some compassion for him, the incivility of his words had brought upon him such a storm of indignation. People should think before they speak. The Lamp did certainly think, but it was always of himself, and not of others.

He scarcely knew which of his antagonists first to encounter; but then, selecting one of those who had last spoken, he turned to the old gentleman's Walking-stick, and thus began:—

"Your accusation, sir, is as false as it is

offensive. I have been drinking certainly;" (here there was a suppressed titter amongst the younger members of the circle;) "yes, drinking," he repeated angrily, "but it's well known I drink nothing but—oil."

The low titter here burst into a shout of laughter, in which most of the company joined.

"It is a pity," said rather a prim-looking Case of knitting-needles, that some of the oil you speak of could not have been cast upon the waves of this angry discord."

"Oh, no, no! I pray you do not so," simpered a little French Doll, shrugging her waxen shoulders. "Imagine how it would spoil my pretty dress."

"If you do not, some of your relations drink something stronger than oil," growled forth the Walking-stick. "You will scarcely deny that there are spirit-lamps."

Again a scoffing laugh ran round the room, till, disgusted with the bad behaviour of some of the more aristocratic members of the Tree circle, a Cricket-bat, which, with some of the larger and heavier articles, occupied a table at a little distance, called out—

"Silence there! You ought to be ashamed

of yourselves,—so many against one. I thought England was the land of fair play."

"Quite right, old fellow, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves," heartily rejoined a handsome little figure dressed as a sailor. "Jim and I," said he, pointing to a small Bugler with merry brown eyes, who was standing next to him, "we've been telling each other so for some time. And I'll tell you what, Mr. Lamp, though you weren't half civil yourself, if anybody interrupts you again, before you have had your fair share of the talk, I'll knock him down. And if there are two of them, Jim will floor the other;—that is to say," added he in a respectful voice, taking off his hat and looking up to the Queen-figure who, crowned and in royal robes, was placed on the summit of the Tree, "if her Majesty has no objection."

The Queen smiled graciously, and again the laugh went round; but this time it was a good-humoured laugh, so nobody minded that.

Silence restored, the Lamp began again, but not now in so excited a manner. The kindly championship of the Cricket-bat and the little

sailor lad had done much to restore him to a better mood.

"Thanks, brave boys," said the Lamp; and his eye looked a little dim, as if a tear had stolen in. "If ever I can do you a good turn, you may depend upon me. Cricket, I fear, is rather out of my line, but if ever I have anything to do with a lighthouse, I shall keep a bright look-out for your ship, little sailor."

There was a great temptation to laugh again at the unconscious and absurd vanity of the Lamp; for though larger than some of his companions, he was but a toy-lamp after all—and to think of his supposing he ever could have anything to do with a lighthouse! However, the late reproofs had done some good, and the company restrained themselves.

Waxing a little more pompous, as he found his remarks were received in silence, the Lamp then looked towards the Amber-mouthed Meerschaum, who was (in imagination) smoking away in utter indifference.

"Your objectionable remark about 'low' Lamps indeed surprised me; for we so closely resemble each other in our peculiar and

brilliant colouring, that most people would take us for relations."

Alas for the vain Lamp! this was too much. He had quite overshot his mark; for every one knew that, whatever may be his deficiency in intellect, the Amber Mouthpiece was of a very old family, and that the Glass Lamp could pretend himself to no such antiquity. He had been made, indeed, but the other day. With him, too, the brilliant colouring, of which he was so proud, was only artificial, and given by the skill of man, in imitation of the natural beauty of the other.

Angry murmurs were again beginning to arise. An agate Bonbonnière laughed sarcastically; a silver Whistle distinctly hissed; and a pretty jet Brooch, who had hitherto taken no part in the quarrel, incensed at this insult to her cousin, exclaimed, "Any child would know better than to put a piece of coloured glass on an equality with a precious stone."

Though far too dignified to express any feeling of annoyance, an angry sparkle shot from the brilliant eyes of a Diamond Ring, the stone of which, from its unusual size and exceeding lustre, was of immense value.

Not really related to the Amber Mouthpiece, their families, indeed, coming from very distant countries, yet, as the great chieftain of the "Mineral Combustible" race, the Diamond had been accustomed to hear of Amber from his own people, and took some interest in the family—mutual relations not only meeting, but often passing their lives together in the same drawer of mineralogical cabinets.

A deep though suppressed feeling of indignation against the self-sufficient and intolerably presuming Lamp was now so powerfully evident, that her Majesty the Queen at length felt obliged to notice it.

Rising from her seat with exquisite grace and dignity, she raised her hand to enforce silence, and instantly every sound was hushed. You could have heard a pin drop, and the ticking of the great clock on the staircase without was distinctly audible through the closed door.

Her people well knew that it was only on occasions of great moment, and when her interference was absolutely requisite, that her Majesty ever came forward to assert her authority; so that nothing could exceed the

affectionate respect with which every member of the Tree circle, and all the individuals on outlying tables (Colonial possessions, as it were, East, West, North, and South), instantly rose to listen to their Queen's address.

"My children," she said, "for a Queen feels ever as a mother for her people, you know it is but rarely that I have occasion personally to claim your obedience. Some of us have passed many weeks together, and I rejoice to say I have never known before such a scene of discord as now so painfully surprises and distresses me, and which I hope may never occur again. If there is not unity and love around a Christmas Tree, where in the world may we expect to find it? Gifts as we are, prepared for the most part by the very hands of Love (those amongst us who have been manufactured by skilled and regular artificers, have at least been summoned and placed here by Love), of various origin, called from very different homes, some from far distant quarters of the globe, we are all met together now, but only for a few hours. Ere to-morrow's sun has risen we shall all be scattered hither and thither, never perhaps to meet again. Queen

as I am, I shall form no exception to the lot of all! I know not yet what my fate will be. Met together, therefore, for so short a time, so soon again to part, shall we not rather seek to derive pleasure than pain from our communion with each other?

"Varied as have been the circumstances of our respective lives, the story of each will, I am sure, be a source of interest to all. Each learning from each their several sorrows and joys will scarcely fail to awaken in every heart some mutual kindly interest. I would propose, therefore," (and here the Queen bent forward, and slightly elevated her voice), "that, if agreeable to all present, as many of us as time may allow should tell the story of their past lives, whence they came, and give some account of their nature or manufacture—in short, anything they know relating to themselves likely to be generally interesting. I will not except myself, if it would please you to hear my story; but I would rather that those of others should precede mine. Say, are we agreed?"

A loyal cheer followed these words, in sign of hearty agreement, while "Long live our

beloved Queen!" burst from the lips of many of her loving subjects.

Her Majesty bowed gracefully, and then added, but not with quite so cheerful a tone as she had before spoken, "For the future of Dolls, even of Queen-dolls, is ever fraught with anxiety; and the Queen of the Christmas Tree was powerless as the cradled wax-baby on the lowest branch, to dispose of her own fate.

"I would," she continued, in graver accents, "propose yet another thing, which is, that such of us as are alive and able to accomplish the journey, should meet in this same room this day twelvemonth. We should not, of course, then occupy the same elevated position we now hold. Other queens and other maids of honour," said she, smiling at a pretty golden-haired damsel standing near her, "will have succeeded us here; the venerable Tree alone will re-appear in his position—the Mowbrays always have it so. Perhaps our friend the Lamp" (the Queen strove hard to keep her countenance) "may, with his companions, again return, but the *Gifts*, great and small, will have passed into the hands of those for whom they are designed. Such of us, then, as are

able shall meet as I propose, and each one add to his former story the events which the coming year may unfold. Are we agreed again?"

Another cheer, yet louder than the first, gave the token of universal assent.

"It therefore only remains for me to request a fitting silence, while each recounts the story of his past life,—which I would beg, for time presses, may be as succinct as possible.—Lady Penelope," said her Majesty, addressing a delicate-looking mother-of-pearl Penholder, "I see you are prepared with your 'Gillott;' may I ask of you to be our Secretary? the silver wings of two of our pretty Fairies will, I am sure, willingly convey you to yonder writing-table, where paper and ink are provided."

To hear was to obey. The little Fairies, first making their obeisance to the Queen, quickly bore the willing Penholder to the table, where she made ready to chronicle all the strange events she should doubtless hear from that marvellously varied company.

"To you, my faithful Guards, I intrust the duty of enforcing silence, if necessary," concluded the Queen. All the officers present

saluted with their swords, the men presented arms, and then stood at "attention."

But as the Queen was resuming her seat, on looking around she caught a look of disappointment on the usually beaming faces of the sailors, who, with hats off, and occasionally running their fingers through their long curly locks, had been gazing with undivided attention on the fair countenance of their liege lady, and who now looked rather blank at having no duty assigned to them.

With graceful tact she continued on the instant:—

"To you, my gallant Blue-jackets, I have also an important duty to intrust. I see, Boatswain, you have your whistle. Accustomed as you especially, my good sailors, are to 'watch,' it is on your keen eyes and ears that I shall depend for letting us have the earliest possible intelligence of the return of the human beings on whom our fates depend. I know our voices are inaudible to mortal ears, but, speaking from my own feelings, I feel sure we should all like a few minutes of silent preparation for the ceremony which will decide our future destinies. One last

request, dear friends,—speak unreservedly before me; remember my presence not as that of a queen, but simply as that of a gentlewoman."

The smiling looks of the Blue-jackets showed their restored good humour, and all was hushed as her Majesty resumed her seat, the attendant damsel hastening to re-arrange the sweeping folds of her mistress's train of crimson, white, and gold.

Before the Queen could raise her sceptre as a sign for some one to begin, the little Paper-ticket pinned upon her royal robe, after a little nervous fluttering, addressed her in a childlike treble voice, saying—

"Please your Majesty, may the Paper-tickets tell their stories too?"

"Certainly," said the Queen, "if they have any story to tell."

"What could such insignificant little creatures say really worth hearing?" exclaimed the portly Travelling-bag.

Whereupon there was, of course, a rustle of indignation which quite filled the room; for little as the Paper-tickets individually were, their number gave effect to any unanimous movement on their part.

But a low rattle of the muskets of the guard instantly awed the little Paper-tickets, and one short, angry flutter was all the sign of displeasure they allowed themselves to make.

"I should not fancy there could be much variety or incident in your stories, little one," said the Queen, kindly, addressing the Paper-ticket on her own dress. "However, if there is time, one of you, at least, shall in your turn have a hearing."

As a foreigner, and one much admired, and whose voice had not been heard in the war of words, all approved of the sign of the sceptre being first extended to a *Coral Bracelet*, who accordingly rose.

Of Neapolitan birth, what little knowledge the Coral Bracelet had of kings and queens was so unlike the fearless, happy trust the island race reposed in their sovereign, that the foreign fair one attached no credence to the desire graciously expressed by her Majesty—that all ceremony towards herself should for a time be dispensed with. Bowing, therefore, very profoundly to the Royal Lady, she began—

"To one so well-informed and all-accomplished as your Majesty—;" but the little Paper-ticket attached to her clasp hurriedly whispered, "Don't speak in that kind of way; our Queen won't like it; she always means what she says."

The Coral Bracelet, therefore, began again, but at first with rather a constrained and frightened manner.

II.

THE STORY OF A CORAL BRACELET.

"ALL the older members of this circle will be too well-informed to wonder at what may perhaps surprise the very young ones—my announcement that I am not originally a denizen of earth.

"Far down below the bright blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea was my birth-place. One would have thought, that covetous as is mankind of all that can afford a moment's gratification, we harmless Corals at least might have found safety in the crystal depths of the ocean! Alas, it is not so!

"In the central part of the Straits of Messina, on a rock five hundred feet below the surface of the water, yet not beyond the blessed influence of the sun's genial rays, was my early home. Yet even there the hand of the spoiler reached me!

"I had listened with trembling to sad stories of outrages in former years; nay, the very

shrub on which I grew had an unsightly gap amidst its beautiful branches, which but too plainly told of some past act of violence. Yet, with the happy forgetfulness of youth, I hoped for myself a bright future. The little creatures whose office it was to increase my growth watched with loving pride the gradual perfecting of my smooth limbs, so brilliantly red in colour; and I was happy, unconscious of what my tenth year should bring forth.

"The spoilers' trade is, alas! an organized one,—they know too well at what time the rifled tree will bear rifling again. I have heard it said they calculate that our desired length, of from eight to ten inches, cannot be attained under ten years. Accordingly, no sooner have we attained the perfection of our beauty, than our wretched parents know they will lose us for ever.

"Fishing vessels set forth from their respective ports in February of each year, to take up their stations on the appointed fishing-grounds; and through the long, bright summer days the cruel work goes on, until September, when they return to their homes

laden with the rich spoil which they have snatched from ours.

"I shudder to recall the scene! Imagine to yourselves half a dozen boats filled with strong men (for the great depths at which we dwell make it at least no easy task for them to obtain us), towing after them two immense beams of wood, secured together in the form of a cross, a heavy weight of stones or lead attached to the centre, while to the outer ends on the under side of the beams are suspended coarse nettings and loosely twisted hemp. A strong rope being fastened to the middle of this clumsy, cruel apparatus, it is guided to the spot where it is considered best to sink it; and then, alas! what was our pride becomes our destruction,—our beautiful branches are entangled in the hemp and netting, and when the great beams are dragged up, ensnared as we are in the treacherous network, we are rudely broken off from our parent stem and carried up in our hempen coils to the surface of the water. Here their interest makes them tender of us, and we are carefully freed from the fatal snare and placed in safety, till our arrival at the destined

port, which is for us the commencement of new pains and sufferings,—the sharp graving tool to make of the larger pieces 'cameos,' and for the smaller bits the cruel drill, that they may be strung into necklaces and bracelets like myself.

"You will say, Why root yourselves on the open rock? Alas for us! even beneath over-hanging caverns there is no safety. Where the rude beams cannot of themselves penetrate, a diver descends to guide them into the most hidden recesses. Sometimes an iron hoop is attached to this cruel beam, a bag hanging below it to secure the unfor tunate fragments thus violently severed from the roof and sides of their submarine dwellings.

"It is not only in the Neapolitan waters, but wherever else our doomed family is found, that these outrages are perpetrated, and in much the same manner, whether it be in the Straits of Bonifacio, between Corsica and Sardinia, on the coasts of Barbary, in the Red Sea, or the Persian Gulf. It is from this last place that the natives of India are principally supplied with our luckless branches,

—alas for us, so universally admired, even from the most ancient times, amongst Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans. In days of old, and even now, amongst Eastern nations, I am told we are sometimes ground into powder and swallowed as medicine."

For an instant the red cheek of the Coral grew pale, but she quickly resumed her story.

"I have heard that the Corals of our immediate family (*Corallium rubrum*) alone give employment to twenty thousand human hands; for after we are carried on shore, it is, as I have said, the lot of many of us to be still further tortured, in being fashioned to suit the caprice of man. Some pieces of Coral are by nature so graceful in form, that, reserved for brooches, they are simply enclasped in gold; while for others, if large in size and perfectly smooth, a most singular destiny is appointed. Set in a strangely-shaped ornament of silver or gold, which is encircled by tiny bells, the service required from the sea-shrub's crimson branch is extraordinary indeed. As an infant's toy, Coral is supposed to soothe pain when rubbed upon its aching, toothless gums!"

Some of the company were here inclined to laugh, but as the Coral evidently considered such an indignity no laughing matter, they restrained themselves, and she continued:—

"Too proud am I of the relationship, although a distant one, to be able to refrain from some allusion to the Corallines of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. Inferior to us in beauty, they infinitely excel us in their indomitable energy and admirable utility. Behold their marvellous works! Can any child of man accomplish such?—Islands built up in the midst of mighty seas!—terraces of rock that crumble not away though angry billows ceaselessly chafe against their sides! There where the crowned palm-tree loves to dwell, and human beings take up their abode, planting their banners of conquest, and calling the lovely islets by their own names—the very foundations upon which they build were laid by insects of my race! No thought of glory theirs! They do the work that is given them to do; and so doing, excel in honour, for they become footprints of the Creator!"

Carried away for a time by her subject,

the Coral Bracelet now suddenly recollected the mixed company before whom she was speaking, and, colouring deeply, she hastened to conclude :—

"For ourselves, valued only for our beauty, such value principally depends on our colour, which varies according to the localities where we are found. The Corals of Sicily, of a brilliant red, or an exquisite pale pink, are estimated at from ten to twenty guineas the ounce; black Coral is very rare, but yellow and dull white are sold for a shilling a pound.

"As yet I have seen but little of life, passing quickly from one trader's hands to another, till I reached a shop in Charing Cross, London, where I was purchased a few weeks ago by Ida Mowbray, who this evening attached me here. Alike with all of you, I know not what my future destiny will be ; but ere I say farewell, I should tell you of another name which I bear, given to me, I am told, from a Greek poet's legend of the Coral's birth.

"When Perseus vanquished the Medusa, her bleeding head (which afterwards became the 'Gorgon' shield of the invincible Minerva),

was laid by him on a low tufted plant growing upon the sea-shore. Crimsoned with gore, lo! the affrighted plant suddenly turned to stone—leaf, and branch, and root; nor even when the ghastly burden was removed, did it ever wake again from out of that stony trance of terror. Night came, and forth from their crystal caves came the sea-nymphs too, to dance as ever with pearled feet upon those yellow sands. Wondering, they beheld the plant transformed from green to red. On tiptoe they drew near. One bolder than the rest stretched forth her hand to pluck one of those rigid-looking leaves. With a strange brittleness it broke off at her touch, and, oh! the blood-red stain was within as without! Affrighted in her turn, the sea-nymph flung afar off into the waters the mysterious thing.

"Her sisters came around, and, resolution conquering fear, they soon uprooted from the sand the strange, inexplicable plant, and hurriedly piece after piece of leaf, and branch, and root, were cast into the sea. Some instantly sank; but others on the restless waves, so brightly shimmering in the fair moonlight, were floated far away, till each at its ap-

pointed spot sank also—there in the ocean's depths to fulfil their destiny, and become the seeds from out of which should spring the lovely Coral trees, and hence my name—'*Gorgona Nobilis.*'"

The Queen bowed her thanks to the pretty Bracelet, and then signed to the Diamond Ring, who instantly arose, throwing back, as he did so, the cover of the morocco case, which Ida had, with infinite pains and ingenuity, arranged should be only partially open, so that the full beauty of the gem should be first displayed to its fortunate possessor.

But such very grand individuals as jewels might well expect to have their own way; and really, in the case of the Diamond, none could have objected to it, so truly noble was his presence. He looked, indeed, his old name of "Adamas," the "Unconquerable." Every one knew that he was of a great age, but from his appearance one could scarcely believe it.

The rain-drop that but an hour ago had fallen from the sky, and sparkling lay on the ivy-leaf that peeped in at the window, was not more freshly, spotlessly, brilliantly pure,

than the magnificent jewel which now beamed forth in all its splendour from the green cushion against which he leant.

It was this exquisite *purity* which was his exceeding charm. Through all the strange vicissitudes of his life,—and noble though he was he had experienced many,—he had preserved throughout all, this peculiar excellence. What though his lot for a time had been cast amongst the low and vile, and he had been surrounded by things which might have soiled another,—no fleck or stain attached itself to him. His talisman was a pure heart, and so no manner of evil had had power to harm him; and in that perfect purity was his beauty, his strength, his exceeding preciousness.

The Diamond was by many years the oldest individual of that large company; yet there he stood, in undiminished vigour, the brightest of them all. The fire of youth, unquenched, unquenchable, beamed from his radiant eye. All knew that on him, the pure in heart, was bestowed the power of receiving and reflecting light. And in that lay the secret of eternal youth. Gifted as he was, the faultless gem should outlive as he outshone them all.

Ever-green as he was, the days of the venerable Fir-tree, though still far from being accomplished, were yet numbered; but none could tell the period when the Diamond should cease to be. The very mansion that now sheltered them all would one day crumble into dust; but still the Diamond would remain, "a thing of beauty, and a joy for ever," with strength undecayed, with lustre undiminished, —peerless as he was pure.

It was pleasant to see how such surpassing excellence as that of the Chief of Precious Stones found cordial acknowledgment from all, even from those who were not generally inclined to admire anything but themselves.

"Well! he is a splendid old fellow," muttered the Lamp.

"Superbe! magnifique!" exclaimed the French Doll, clasping her little white hands together in an ecstasy.

But the Paper-ticket which was pinned to her breast (some of these little individuals seem to have assumed to themselves the office of special constables for the evening) reproved her for speaking French in the presence of England's Queen. The power of talking

English for that night had been bestowed on all the Gifts, even on those just arrived from foreign countries. "It was a very great privilege, and if they did not choose to avail themselves of it, let them be silent, or pay a forfeit whenever they forgot themselves," said the little Paper-ticket, rather angrily, for she was excessively proud of being English; the more so, as England was known to excel in the manufacture of her kind of paper.

The company now prepared to listen with the utmost attention to the story of the magnificent jewel, the object of such universal admiration.

With the courteousness of true nobility, the Diamond bowed, not only to the First Gentlewoman present, but also to the listening company, and especially to the Penholder of mother-of-pearl, whose delicate complexion was now unusually flushed with excitement, at her being intrusted with the important office of recording the adventures of so distinguished a personage. Her colour went and came very prettily, as the kindly Fire-light smiled encouragingly upon her.

III.

THE STORY OF A DIAMOND RING.

"At my great age you will easily believe, kind friends, that I find it somewhat difficult to determine which, out of the many various scenes of a long and eventful life, will have most interest for you.

"Two pictures, however, there are, which being remembered most vividly by myself, I may be the better able to bring before you. But if, in my stories of what I have seen myself, or have heard from others, I should grow too diffuse, bear with me, for it is, you know, a defect of old age.

"May I be pardoned the natural pride of race, if I begin by reminding you that in all times Diamonds have been prized above all other gems.

"Our beauty is not our only recommendation. In the present day our uses are manifold, as the hardest substance in nature. What but the Diamond-splinter could drill in rubies the

hole required by the watch jeweller, or pierce fine wires of silver and gold, or bore through china and enamel? The exquisitely cut cameo, the delicately engraved seal, nay, the cutting and polishing of all gems, require Diamond powder. So also does rock-crystal, from which the best glasses for spectacles are made, called 'pebbles.' The glazier asks the Diamond to cut his window panes; and from our stones have been fashioned 'lenses' for microscopes, which are considered superior to all others.

"But in centuries gone by we were regarded with even superstitious reverence, on account of the hidden virtues we were supposed to possess. Men wore us as 'amulets,' to preserve them from poison, pestilence, and fear; nay, we were believed to control anger, and insure unbroken concord between husbands and wives! O 'Family Diamonds!' of such achievements have ye any to boast?

"Yet more: on the starlike serenity of our unchanging and unchangeable lustre men looked, as on the mysterious virtue of a talisman which insured success in every enterprise. To purchase a single stone possessed

of such magic properties, coffers of heaped-up gold have been eagerly proffered—sometimes in vain ; and to obtain us by force, alas ! too often has blood been poured out like water.

"Looked upon as the prize of victory, the emblem of power, in the East, the birth-place of the most celebrated of our race, dynasties have risen or fallen according as the chief could, or could not, display, in bracelet, sword, or diadem, the auspicious jewel, to which was attached the blind adherence and unquestioning support of his followers.

"Who has not heard the story of the Koh-i-noor, the 'Mountain of Light,' whose recorded genealogy dates back to the year 1550. It shone from the diadem of the mighty Aurungezebe, or blazed from amid the countless gems that incrusted the 'Peacock throne.' The pride of Delhi was borne away by the Persian conqueror, Nadir Shah, but only for a time. It soon returned to its native land, and the Affghan warrior who brought back the Koh-i-noor claimed the right to dispose of the sovereignty of Hindostan! Vainly in after years did a captive Shah, clinging to the hope of its talismanic power, build the priceless

jewel of Golconda into his prison walls. It could not be concealed, and flashing forth into the light, it followed still the train of conquest, till Britain's rule had finally quelled the never-ending conflicts of Indian potentates; and the 'Mountain of Light' passed over the seas to shine from its golden cage in the nations' eyes who had come from afar to England's Palace of Peace. In Victoria's hands the great Diamond of the Moguls found rest at last, and became to her the significant pledge of that more complete dominion in the East, which the then unforeseen events of the last few years should assure to the Island-Queen.

"But which of the great crown Diamonds of Europe has not its romance of real life to tell?

"Let us travel still further back, to 1477. It is a field of battle—the disastrous field where Charles the Bold, the great Duke of Burgundy, lost the flower of his people, his crown, and his life. See fallen from his plumed hat a Diamond of great size and exceeding lustre. A Swiss soldier discovered the gem, and it was quickly sold to a gentleman of France. Nearly a hundred years have gone by—the French

troops clamour for their pay—their sovereign is in great necessity—the Loyal Sanci is willing to pawn the jewel of his house; but the precious Diamond reaches not its destination. Henry III. overwhelms his benefactor with reproaches, and contemns his folly in intrusting a thing of such value to a dependant; but the faithful heart suspects not lightly the fidelity of others. Sanci, who was willing for his royal master to risk so much, doubts not the honesty of the old servant into whose care the Diamond had been given.

"An eager search is made. They track the brigands' feet close on the steps of the hasting messenger. They penetrate the recesses of the forest. It refuses to keep its guilty secret—the crimsoned leaves point to the grave of the murdered man. 'Alive or dead, I will stake my honour upon his!' exclaimed the gallant knight. 'See to it, varlets, for I know my jewel is safe with him;'—and, lo! from within the lifeless corse did reverent hands draw forth the missing gem, which the faithful servant had swallowed! Unable to defend it living, he had preserved his trust in death!

"And the name of the master so faithfully

served was long after borne by the jewel, as, unflecked and without a stain, the 'Sanci Diamond' sparkled amid the crown jewels of France.*

"But forgive me; in the proud destinies of the great ones of my race I forget the humbler story of my individual life.

"I am by birth a Brazilian. By negro slaves employed in searching for gold I was accidentally discovered in the bed of a rivulet flowing at the base of one of the rugged mountains of Serro do Frio, the highest mountain range in the Brazils.

"At that time, the middle of the seventeenth century, Diamonds in the New World were not recognised as such—they were believed to be the exclusive product of the East. To the sparkling stones that were found in the river-beds of the mountains of Brazil no value was attached. The search was for gold. The yellow metal doth so bewitch men's eyes, that jewels

* About this diamond there are many conflicting statements. By some it is said to have passed through the hands of a priest, a pedler, a duke of Florence, and a king of Portugal, ere it reached the hands of the Lord de Sanci. Pledged to the Jews by Henry of France, it remained unredeemed till the reign of Louis XIV. At the time of the Revolution it disappeared from amongst the crown jewels of France, and is supposed to have passed into the hands of a Russian nobleman.

far more precious than it are often cast aside by its blind worshippers.

"It was even so, about two centuries ago, on a rivulet's bank in the district of Villa do Principe. A few meagre grains of gold were eagerly hoarded up, and diamonds of inestimable value were carelessly tossed back into the stream. Some few were retained as pretty pebbles, to be presented to the Portuguese governor of the district; and by him they were used as shining counters in playing cards.

"My fate hung in the balance, as, with three or four other unrecognised gems, I lay in the hand of a negro slave. While holding us up by turns to the light, I slipped from his fingers and fell back into the stream. To some this might have looked like chance, and an unlucky chance which had thus flung me back into obscurity, while my companions, discovered at the same moment as myself, were ere long (as I afterwards learned) promoted to great honour. As pretty toys they were sent to Lisbon as a present to the Dutch minister, and by him transmitted as curiosities to Amsterdam, where the most accomplished lapidaries in the world were then, as now, to be found,

and by them the glittering stones were pronounced to be *Diamonds !**

"Meanwhile, by what seemed (to those who believe in chance !) a chance movement of a hand, myself cast back into the little stream, did I regret the additional years of quiet obscurity which thus became my lot ? Ah, no ! for who can ever tire of Nature's holy, happy converse ? In my still earlier days, cradled in the dark bosom of the mountains, I had learned from them solemn secrets, which in their silent solitudes they had revealed to none beside. And as I then lay beneath my crystal coverlet, and the rippling waters sang their sweet lullabies, I looked up with adoring wonder, where far, far above the cloud-capped summits of the distant hills shone glorious the azure sky that curtained in, I knew, splendours beyond imagination to conceive. So I wearied not while my time of probation passed, and a work of joy indeed was that assigned for my first intercourse with men, and for which I had been so graciously reserved.

* To M. Voorsanger, of the diamond-cutting factory of Mr. Coster of Amsterdam, was intrusted the re-cutting of the Koh-i-noor. It was re-cut in London in 1852, and was first placed in the mill by the late Duke of Wellington. It is calculated that of 28,000 Jews inhabiting Amsterdam, 10,000 depend for their support on the diamond trade.

"More than a century had gone by, and now on the rivulet's bank of Serro do Frio, the search was for gems, not gold.

"On their high chairs the overseers had taken their places. Before them stood the slaves; each had his rake with which to drag into his trough the appointed portion of '*cascalho*.'* And now the water flows into each separate trough, and the bending slaves with busy rakes drag to and fro the jewelled sand.

"On a sudden a mulatto slave stood erect, —a quick clap of the hands was heard,—his arm was extended, and he held me forth. I saw his eyes flash as with living fire, and an inarticulate sound burst from his lips.

"Behold! now there is great excitement—the superintendents rise—the negroes pause in their work,—all turn to gaze on the fortunate slave, who with extended arm stands like a dark statue, still and motionless, as if the sudden joy had deprived him of all signs of life. His fellow-workers, with friendly

* Name given in Brazil to the soil in which diamonds are found. It consists of quartzose gravel, mixed with oxyde of iron, and contains, besides diamonds, topazes and grains of gold.

nods, and rapid words, and much display of white teeth, express their delight in his happy discovery,—for it is no common one that he has made. As far as sight could determine, the Diamond found seemed to be of great weight. If it weigh seventeen and a half karats, the finder will have gained his freedom!

"Still motionless stood the fortunate slave. An official drew near and took me from his fingers. Obeying a sign, Felippo follows the arbiter of his fate. The gem is weighed; it is the required weight; and the freedman falls on his knees, and lifts his clasped hands and glistening eyes to heaven in an ecstasy of gratitude no words could have had power to express.

"The news spread quickly. A stone of such size is rare, and the finding of one an event that scarcely occurs oftener than twice in the year. Felippo is a universal favourite, and all rejoice in his good fortune. Hastily the women have plucked from the nearest gardens whatever flowers could be found; the wreath with which to crown him is quickly made; and the youngest and prettiest of the dark

damsels draws near, and on tiptoe tries to place it on the head of the tall and handsome lad.

"But what marvel is this? What! silent still! Felippo, with a gesture of dissent puts away the freedman's wreath. He will not even look at it, or at the pretty Inez who offers it. His face too is changed; its passionate joy has faded away, and a noble calm—a resolute content has taken its place.

"One of the officials has marshalled the procession which is to accompany the Diamond-finder to the 'administrator,' who will, on the receipt of the Diamond and the certificate of its weight, pay down at once to his master the price of the slave, and Felippo will be free!

"Almost mechanically he prepares to take his place in the procession once more. The dark-eyed Inez shyly steals behind him, and as she smilingly, wistfully lifts her wreath, she whispers, 'God be thanked, Felippo, you are free.' A strange mingling of gladness and of yearning which looks like grief, passes over the young lad's face. He struggles to regain his calm as he bends his tall head to whisper

to his Indian love, so that none beside may hear:—

"'Not Felippo, Inez, but his *mother,—she* shall be *free.*'

"Like an arrow shot from a bow, the dark maiden sped away, and ere the procession reached the administrator's dwelling, the mother of Felippo was there to clasp her arms around her noble son, to press him with passionate tenderness to her bosom, and with overflowing tears to beseech him to give up his determination.

"'The noonday of my life is past; it is morning with you, my son. Oh, what were the joys of freedom to me compared with the rapture of knowing you free! A woman! I am as a flower whose brightness is but for a day; while you, my Felippo, a *freedman,* shall be as some stately tree whose roots shall strike deep into the earth, whose branches shall spread abroad and bear fruit abundantly. Not for me, not for me, O Felippo, my best beloved; but for the love you bear me, oh, grant my prayer, and claim for yourself the freedom you have won.'

"It was a touching sight, and many who

beheld it wept. The excitable children of a southern clime, with animated gesticulations and noisy cries, sided some with the son, and some with the mother. The administrator was powerless to decide, for neither the delicate woman nor the strong youth would yield.

"Once more the procession set forth. This time the mother went with her son, their arms entwined round each other; the administrator followed, and the crowd which gathered as they went. Their destination was the governor's palace.

"Fernando de San Leon, haughty noble though he was, was moved beyond his wont, and alternately strove to convince the weeping Lucia and the resolute Felippo that one or the other must give way, for of one only was the freedom secured.

"Wondering at the unusual concourse and noise, the governor's young daughter, the lustrous-eyed Juanita had glided into the hall of audience, and timidly she besought her father that the difficulty might be solved by letting both go free.

"'How so, my child? There is but one Diamond found of the required size; could its

fellow be produced, I would gladly see such a noble struggle ended, and mother and son both freed. Has Juanita amongst her toys a gem that could match with this?' said San Leon, holding me forth in his hand.

"The poor child, abashed, hung her head.

"'Let no more be said, then, my daughter. Say, master jeweller, what sum do you bid for this shining stone? To meet the increasing expenses of the mines, I have been authorized to dispose of some gems.'

"Then turning to one of his officers, he continued—

"'Let the price of the Diamond be paid into the treasury, after payment has been made to the master of the slaves, Felippo and Lucia, for the *one* which ere sunset they shall have agreed to choose. And now, let the hall be cleared; our horses wait; my Fernando must not be baulked of his evening ride.'

"And as he spoke, the governor laid his hand tenderly on the dark curls of a beautiful boy who stood close by his side.

"The stern eyes of the haughty noble melted into almost womanly softness, as he looked upon the child who was, in truth, the

very idol of his heart. A beloved wife had died in giving birth to this his only son, and on him the father, cold and reserved with all the world beside, had concentrated the whole unutterable tenderness of his nature. The child knew his power, but, being of a noble nature, he ever used it to increase the happiness of all around, and especially that of his darling sister.

"The boy stood now, his pretty brows knit with a troubled and anxious expression, very rarely to be seen on his radiant countenance.

"Slowly the audience was breaking up. All present seemed unwilling to give up their undefined hope that something might yet occur to accomplish the freedom of both the loving mother and devoted son. But now Lucia and Felippo themselves turned to depart. In an agony of distress the tender-hearted Juanita, forgetting her usual fear of her father, rushed to him once more, and, clasping his knees, she prayed of him to say the word that should set both free.

"'No word of mine, Juanita, can do this —it must be money, or money's worth—it is a gem that is wanting. Bring but a match to

this sparkling stone, and I will myself pay the price of redeeming one of that loving pair.'

"Juanita burst into tears!

"The brilliant rays of a tropical sun streamed in through the open windows of the hall, and as Juanita lifted her tearful face from her father's arm, against which she had leant, the golden gleam lit up a tear which lay upon his velvet sleeve.

"The little Fernando sprang forward, his beautiful face radiant with delight. He looked archly up into his father's eyes, and, with the joyous fearlessness of one who never knew a rebuff, he exclaimed, pointing to the glittering drop—

"'See, father, Juanita has matched the gem!'

"The governor smiled; the little lad knew his power, and caressingly he twined his soft fingers around his father's hand.

"'Be it as Fernando wills, my daughter! Say, my boy, what sum must be given for Juanita's tear?'

"'The price of Felippo's freedom, to be sure!'

"And the hall rang with Evvivas,—'Ev viva Fernando! Evviva il gobernador!'

"Brought to Europe by the jeweller who purchased me in Brazil, my *education* had then to begin. As a rough, unpolished Diamond, I was comparatively of little worth; for those who trade in us estimate the value of a stone when polished as double that which it had before;—and I would have my younger hearers, in remembering this, remember too that the polishing of gems is no deceitful glossing over of defects. By it we only become the more transparent. Admitting the light more freely, we are known more truly as we really are—those who look on us, and we ourselves, becoming the more quickly conscious of the smallest speck or flaw.

"It was by a native of Holland, Louis de Berquem, that, in the year 1476, the art (till then considered impossible) of cutting and polishing Diamonds was discovered.

"It is with us as with human beings; our perfecting—though in itself the operation of a superior hand—can only be obtained by contact with our own kind. Such discipline —subject to a directing power—is effected amongst ourselves. Our rough angles are removed by rubbing one against another. Dia-

mond cuts Diamond, and from Diamond powder mixed with oil, applied to our surface by a rapidly revolving plate,* we receive our final polish.

"Do my young friends think that such usage sounds harsh? I, who have been subjected to it, assure them, that of all the painful processes through which I have passed I would not now have one the less to remember, with infinite patience and toil accomplished as they were, by the faithful workman to whose hands I was intrusted. Each 'facet' then cut adds to my gladness and my glory now; for by such the light of heaven enters in, and in humble trustful love is reflected back again.

"My *education* (as I therefore call the cutting and polishing I received) completed, I at once began a strangely varying career. Not only did I pass through various hands, but various also were the articles to which I was attached, and various the gems in whose company I found myself placed.

"From the jeweller's casket, with prison-like

* In the cutting of the Koh-i-noor, which was accomplished in thirty-eight days, the speed of the revolving plane was at one time 3000 revolutions in a minute!

walls, and strong gates locked and barred, I passed out into the pomp and splendour of a court. As one of the jewels encircling the picture of his affianced princess, I was pressed with joy to a monarch's lips. In the gemmed locket which preserved her dead husband's hair, I have since been bathed in a desolate widow's tears. Surmounting a gorgeous snuff-box, his sovereign's costly gift, a successful diplomatist has gazed on me with complacent smiles. But I shuddered once to behold the look of unutterable anguish which a young beauty cast upon me and my fellow-gems, sparkling as we did on jewelled chains; so odious, alas! to her, binding her in marriage to one she detested. Her jewel-box stolen, I lay buried for a time in the ground, till the trembling thief could dispose of me to another dishonest knave. But soon I passed with joy into cleaner hands, and glanced triumphantly forth from the jewelled hilt of a magnificent sword, a grateful country's homage-gift to a noble warrior, whose gallant hand it was an honour to touch,—'Sans peur et sans reproche,'—fearless and faultless. And then came another labour of love,—to clasp a string

of pearls around the fair neck of one whose peerless beauty of form was the fitting type of the pure spirit that dwelt within. After a time, it was by the lovely Lady Mary Vivian's own wish, that I was removed from her necklace, to be placed in this circlet of gold, and become the ring you now see.

"But already I have lingered too long. I must sketch my last picture in haste.

"The open window looks on a magnificent park. The majestic oaks, the emerald turf, the tranquil serenity of the whole scene, overarched by skies of softest, tenderest blue, tell that it is in England, even without the additional testimony of the interior of the chamber, of which the matchless air of luxury and comfort combined, no other country could produce.

"But ah! that luxurious home is but of little account to her who lies on the sofa, which is drawn close to the open window. Softly, tenderly, does the summer evening's breeze glide into that quiet room. Has it a message to deliver to that gentle girl from sister angels awaiting her without? Is it therefore that it so lingeringly passes over her face, and lovingly

lifts up the long golden curls floating like a halo around her head?

"Not yet, O sister angels, is she ready. Wait yet a little while, and Mary Vivian will have done with earth; and then, her place in the courts of heaven vacant no more, her waiting harp shall respond to her raptured touch, and another angelic voice shall swell the songs of the blessed.

"Her lover knelt by her side, his face white with suppressed agony, his whole frame convulsed with emotion. He kisses passionately her wasted hand—too late! too late! Ah! what would he not give to recall the follies and excesses of the past? What hateful madness was it that possessed him, thus to drain the poison-cups whose dregs are bitterness, and to let go the priceless pearl that would have been his joy for ever!—too late! too late!

"Too delicate and fragile a flower to struggle long with anxiety and grief, his Mary's life is spent! and they have met to part—but not for ever. Mary's hope still clings to that—not for ever.

"In their Father's home shall they not meet again, where sorrow and sin are not, and where all tears are wiped away?

"Too late for earthly happiness; but not too late for happiness that passeth not away!

"A few earnest, all-important words, gasped forth with immeasurable tenderness, and Mary, pointing first to the word engraved within the golden circlet, 'Excelsior,' put on her lover's finger the ring in which she had had set the most precious jewel she possessed. Then pressing to her lips her own betrothed ring, that would go with her to the grave, she leant her head against her dear one's breast; with the half-shut eyes and trembling lip of a tired child, she softly whispered, 'Peace'—and slept, to wake no more!

"Earth! earth! earth! unloose your bands, and give heaven its own!

"The prayers of the dying girl were heard. On the burning plains of India her Harry became a Christian soldier; and, as one of Havelock's hero band, amid shouts of victory he passed from a world whose trials had been blessed to him.

"I had never left his finger. His last act was to press his precious love-gift to his lips. His last words were,—Excelsior—Mary.'

"Amongst the spoils of war, I fell into the

hands of one who was glad to dispose of me for what seemed to him an enormous sum.

"My purchaser was the grey-haired old general, some of you may have seen, the uncle and godfather of Ida Mowbray; and to her care I was intrusted to-day. From my Paper-ticket being marked with a *letter*, not a *number*, I imagine my destiny will not be determined as with the majority of the Gifts, by chance."

Instantly there began much twisting of bodies and turning of heads on the part of the Gifts, to determine to which class they belonged, the *lettered* or the *numbered*,—some of the former instantly assuming amusingly consequential airs, while a few individuals amongst the latter and larger class looked somewhat vexed or discontented.

The jolly Cricket-bat attempted to restore the general good humour, by announcing that, in his opinion, the "Numbers" had it hollow, and proposed a resolution should be carried to that effect; a show of hands to determine the majority, to be followed by a cheer from the

winning side for their "noble selves." This unexpected proposition, accompanied by many a gay jest and quick repartee, effectually routed the malcontents, and put to flight all signs of annoyance.

They now perceived that the Diamond Ring, who had unwittingly occasioned this excitement, was still awaiting their pleasure to conclude. When silence was restored, he continued :—

"The story of a Diamond were incomplete without some mention of the *Karat*—a name so long associated with ourselves. In Europe it is an imaginary weight answering to about four grains troy, but in the East it is a reality. In the district of Shangallas, in Africa, a long famous mart for gold dust, there grows a tree named "*Kuara*," signifying the "Sun," for its flowers and fruits are of a vivid flame colour. The scarlet seeds of this tree, which white men call the Coral-tree of Abyssinia (*Erythrina Abyssinica*), are of uniform weight. From time immemorial they have been used by the Africans for weighing gold dust. They were at an ancient period transported to India as weights for precious stones."

The Diamond was now about to resume his seat, when a low confabulation was heard in the grate, and the Log was heard to say, "I don't quite think he'll like it."

"Stuff and nonsense!" replied the Coal hastily. It was such a pity the kind and warm-hearted Coal, with so much that was really good and valuable about him, had so hot a temper, that, when once lighted, most people were a little afraid of coming into close contact with him. He would sometimes get into terrible rages, and fling out angry sparks on all sides, so that friends and foes alike suffered; and he really did incalculable mischief. It was easy for him afterwards to say such passions did not last long (which, by-the-by, was not always the case), and then himself look cheery and comfortable as before; the things he had injured could not look so, for often the harm he had done to them was irreparable.

Just now, however, the Coal, though in a blaze, was not mischievously so.

"Stuff and nonsense, I say!" he angrily repeated; "it is just those tip-top sort of fellows who are not ashamed of poor relations

as well-born as themselves, but obliged to work for their living. Why, amongst human beings, it is only those who have nothing in themselves to be proud of, who shrink from what their grandfather Adam did before them —work. It is a good name, an honourable name, the name of the 'Working Classes,' and I hope they'll never wish to change it. I and my people, living as we do amongst both classes, can tell you there are many of the higher class who work right hard; only with them it is head work, and with the others mostly hand work. Why, look at her Majesty. God bless her; doesn't she work hard in her way, with her papers, and her speeches, and her councils, and what not? And in his way, too, the bright Sun above us does his work; and in some countries where all the year through he shines as powerfully as he does with us in July, I've heard that every evening when he goes to rest he looks as hot and flushed as—"

"As you do now, old fellow," said the Log, but so good-humouredly, that the Coal could not help bursting into a hearty laugh; and giving his companion a friendly nod, he then

addressed the Diamond in a frank yet respectful manner.

"Your grace will pardon my asking you if we Coals have any right to a name we rather pride ourselves upon—that of 'Black Diamonds?'"

"Certainly you have, my good cousin," replied the Jewel, "and many thanks for reminding me of what I ought not to have left unsaid. We are of many colours,—red, blue, yellow, green, brown, and black; but the name of 'Black Diamonds,' as applied to my friends in the grate, relates to the marvel of our composition being so closely connected with Charcoal, though in appearance we are so dissimilar;—we have, indeed, been called 'crystallized Carbon.'

"Dear friends, I dare not linger now, but should we meet again, it would delight me to tell of not only my near relationship to the brilliant Coals, but also to that quiet-looking little writing-pencil over there, called Black Lead, but not lead at all, his proper name being Plumbago or Graphite, which is only another peculiar form of Carbon."

The sign of the sceptre was now extended

to a gay-looking Box of Bon-Bons. It seemed only fair that the younger ones should now have a speaker chosen from amongst themselves, and, after the graver experiences of the Jewel, all felt that something lighter and more juvenile would be a pleasant change.

But there was great commotion within the Box. The Bon-Bons, though not in general remarkable for shyness,—indeed, up to this very moment having been, each one of them, rather ambitious of some notice,—the moment the desired honour was proffered to them, one and all shrank from accepting it.

"Oh! it is impossible," they whispered to each other. "What! give an account of themselves to all that grand company?—oh! that was what they could not do!"

A crystallized Cherry, scarlet at the very idea, hid herself behind some candied Angelica, who in her turn crouched down in the shadow of some dry preserved Ginger. A Barley-sugar Ball, transparent enough, pretty creature, to have borne the strictest scrutiny, slipped down to the very bottom of the Box. Burnt Almonds, rings of candied Orange and Lemon Peel, and Liqueur-drops, sparkling and many-

coloured, hastily dived below, the one after the other.

It seemed very doubtful if, amongst all these merry little creatures, whose low chattering had been, until then, almost incessant, there would now be found even one speaker. At last the name of one of their companions burst unanimously from the lips of all!

"The *Chocolate Bon-Bon*, let her speak; she'll do it best; she has seen more of the world than most of us here."

"Dear Chocolate, do speak," said Angelica's soft voice.

"We'll make a place for you to stand upon," others exclaimed; and clustering together, their linked arms formed a tolerably safe platform, upon which the little Brownie was very tenderly lifted by a bit of rose-coloured Sugar-candy.

With a pretty mixture of playfulness, almost a little saucy, dashed by a great deal of girlish shyness, which, both being perfectly natural, made her irresistibly charming, the little brown beauty began—

IV.

THE STORY OF A CHOCOLATE BON-BON.

"THEY tell me I am of Indian extraction, my native home being that of the Indians of Central America. I'm sure I don't mind. Indeed, from what I heard the good nuns of Trinidad read aloud about the fine old Aztec race, who delighted in Chocolate long before the Spaniards came to rob them of Mexico, I am rather proud of my connection with them, except that their priests were—oh! horribly cruel. But I only wish the present Mexicans were a hundredth part as brave and industrious as the Mexicans of Cortez's time.

"'Spanish' Chocolate indeed! I'm not Spanish at all, or French either; I 'growed,' as Topsy would say, in Trinidad, one of the British West India islands; so, dear Old England, I certainly belong to you, though it did so happen that it was in a convent of Spanish nuns that I was made into my present form. You know nuns are everywhere celebrated for

making sweetmeats of all kinds. Poor things! I was glad they had us and other 'dulces' to amuse themselves with, for theirs must be a very dull kind of life.

"Of course you know my proper name is 'Theobroma Cacao.' And what do you think *Theobroma* means? 'Food for the gods!'—is not that grand? It's quite true, Acidulated Drop; ask any one who knows Greek if it isn't. And pray, remember I am *Cacao*,—not Cocoa, as the silly people in English shops will call us. I think they're ashamed to give our real names, because as 'Cocao' they sell such nasty mixtures.

"Cocoa nuts, and Cacao nuts are so very different! Proud as we are of our ancient race and of our grand name, we do not pretend to equal the former. They grow on a crowned tree, and their race is the royal race of Palms.

"I know myself how beautiful, how kindly, is the queen-like Cocoa-Palm. Dear friends, you scarcely can conceive how gloriously beautiful are those regions of the sun, which gave birth to both her and me. Angelica might tell you, if she would, of the invigorating

breezes of the north (ah! I shiver to think of them); but listen to Vanilla and myself, and you will almost be tempted to cross the sea to look upon those lovely lands!

"Vanilla and I are great friends. We come from the same country. But we are quite unlike: I grow upon a tree, and she is a climbing plant, with pretty flowers of white, striped with yellow and red. The French and Spanish always put us together, and we agree so well; but this is when we are made into Chocolate, which is the name of the *food* prepared from the kernels of the seeds of the Cacao, the name given to the tree itself; that name, also, is of Mexican origin, 'Caccava quahuitl.'

"Ah! in those days how honoured we were. Our seeds were actually used as money! To be sure six only reached the value of a halfpenny, but still it shows we were not like common seeds. They tell me we are still so used in Mexico.

"Would you like to know what was the favourite beverage of poor Montezuma, the last king of the Aztec race, more than three centuries ago? The oily kernels of the Cacao

seeds were bruised in water; to this they added the fragrant berries of Allspice and the leaves or roots of Annotta, both for their flavour and their rich yellow colour; they then added boiled Maize flour, or 'Indian Corn;' and this was called 'Chocolatl.'

"The Chocolate now of both Spaniards and French is made by roasting (yes, *roasting*, but you see I have survived it all) the kernels of the Cacao seeds, which are then bruised into a paste and mixed with sugar: afterwards is added Vanilla always; Cinnamon, Cloves, Anise, and Pepper, often—and sometimes Musk and Ambergris. When made into Bon-Bons still more sugar is added, and the pretty little white, blue, red, and yellow comfits sprinkled over, which make, as you see, such a pretty dress.

"English Chocolate is much more simply made; only the bruised kernels mixed with sugar. I wish they knew more generally in England how wholesome, how nourishing we are. They must be beginning to know it, by giving us of late years to their brave sailors —ah! how much better for the gallant lads than fiery spirits which make them prematurely

old, and, worse still, have so often led to scenes of horror indescribable. Imagine the wrecked ship—the hungry billows clamouring for their prey—and, by the forked lightning's lurid ray, the mad seamen finding their way to the spirit casks ;—terrible, indeed, in the delirium of drunkenness to rush into the presence of the Most High !

" Dear English friends, Theobroma works no ill. Nay, many and many a wasted form has her health-giving draught restored to strength and vigour.

"It was this pleasant thought, of doing good service to the race of beings to whom my parents and myself owed our cultivation, that reconciled me to my fate, when, plucked from the tree, I found myself not amongst those who were retained for seed.

"Though happier, indeed, was their appointed lot—to grow up into fair trees sometimes twenty feet in height, bearing all through the year bright spear-shaped leaves of evergreen, clustering red flowers, and brownish-yellow fruit. Our fruit are oval-shaped pods, containing in each pod from twenty to one hundred of these precious seeds. Fresh from

the tree these seeds are pleasant to the taste. Even before they are ripe they are sometimes gathered and preserved in sugar. The Cacao-tree's is a happy life; twice every year we yield our willing crop; at eight years old we attain our full vigour.

"In the Caraccas and in Trinidad we are especially cultivated; in this latter country our annual product is 1,500,000 lbs. On wide savannas we are grown. Tenderly we are cared for. Shade-trees are planted in the same regular rows as ourselves, to shelter us from the too fierce rays of the sun. The graceful Plantain (*Musa Paradisiaca*), with its broad satiny leaves of lovely green on one side; and on the other Erythrina Umbrosa, the shady Coral-bean-tree, our foster-mother, as she ever is. To her they have even given our name, and in the western world she is best known as 'Madre di Cacao'—'Mother of Cacao.' My heart leaped up when I heard the Diamond speak of the 'Karat,' the scarlet seed of Erythrina Abyssinica, which is the Coral-tree of Africa and the old world, as my foster-mother is that of the new world. There, too, the 'Bois Immortel' outspreads her noble

branches, where, clustering like bright birds, are velvety flowers of dazzling scarlet.

"But now, dear friends, farewell—farewell for ever! for I at least can have no hope of meeting you again! My destiny, and that of all my sisters, will soon be accomplished. Our hours are numbered. With most of us it is but too certain that the morrow's sun will look not upon us! When you hear the merry children's joyous shout, think of us, for it will be our knell. That door unclosed, and we have done with life for ever! Amidst laughter, and songs, and gleeful words, we shall pass away on the rosy lips of the little ones! What, then? We are not cowards, sisters! All must die; and for us there is one thought to sweeten the sharp pangs of death—we know that we leave a cherished remembrance behind!"

As the Chocolate Bon-Bon turned away, upon her soft brown cheek there seemed to glitter a tear,—or it might have been a sparkle of crystallized sugar!

There were a few moments of tender and compassionate silence; but it did not last long,

and it was broken by the little sufferers themselves.

"Now, boys," exclaimed the merry-hearted little Sweeties, looking towards a *Bag of Marbles*, "now for your turn."

"Botheration, so it is!" shouted one of them, taken very much aback.

"Don't be rude," called out their Paper-ticket. "I'm sure that is infinitely worse than talking Timbuctoo, if there is such a foreign language."

It actually was the Bag of Marbles' turn; the sceptre pointed straight at them, and many of the company laughed, while nodding encouragingly at them.

Meanwhile, what a "coffufflin" there was within the Bag! Such pushing to and fro, and racing down to the bottom of the Bag, just as the "Sweeties" had done,—only, of course, Marbles, being more of the nature of boys, were rougher and more noisy than the girl-like Bon-Bons; but all was done good-humouredly. What a rattle and a rumpus there was!

But all this time the company were waiting, and at last one shiny-faced, nice-looking little fellow cried out—

"I say, boys, behave yourselves! It won't do to keep the Queen waiting."

"Behave yourself, old fellow. Speak up if you've a mind to," said several.

"Porphyry in the chair! Porphyry in the chair!" shouted a dozen merry voices; and they hustled and bustled till they got the pretty little Marble to the very top of them, where he stood looking very red and confused. But he was "plucky" at heart, so seeing there was no help for it, he determined to make the best of what he had to do, and clearing his voice, he began.

V.

THE STORY OF THE BAG OF MARBLES.

"PLEASE your Ma—. Well I—," stammered the little fellow; and then looking very brave and determined, began again—

"My name is Porphyry. I am from Cornwall; but we Porphyries are found in many other places—in Cumberland—the Isle of Arran—and Ben Nevis, mountain of snow: so, you see, we're of a hardy nature; and so we ought to be, for, being with boys, we must get knocked about. But it is in foreign countries that we are seen to the greatest advantage. In Eastern Siberia there are huge rocks of us; but they are in uninhabited regions, where no use is made of us. I'd rather be a jolly little 'Marble,' as I am, making merry, as I do, with rosy-cheeked English boys, than be a great, lonely rock, however grand it may sound, with no one to care for me. Now, when I get into some little boy's pocket, he'll be sure to care for me; and

if I'm ever lost, he'll not be happy till I'm found again. So I'd rather be as I am, though I can't help feeling rather proud of my grand relations. I have some still more celebrated than the rocks of Eastern Siberia.

"What do you think of the Andes, next to the Himalayas the highest mountains in the world? You may think how pleased I was when I heard that amongst them there are cliffs of Porphyry!

"Well, those are the magnificent ones as to size, but for beauty you should hear about the ancient Porphyry of Egypt! Just fancy a beautiful red shading into purple, with snow-white crystals of Felspar glistening all through!

"There is another thing I should like to say about my family. Besides our individual value, we have in some places, like Hungary, for instance, things in our keeping more precious than ourselves,—valuable ores, gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, and iron. So, you see, we Porphyries have no cause to be ashamed of our name."

The little fellow was about to conclude, but seeing that his hearers evidently expected

him to tell them something more, he paused, growing redder and redder, looking dreadfully puzzled as to what he could say next. At last he bethought himself of his companions, and resumed:—

"You'd scarcely suppose what a mixed lot we Marbles are, though I fancy we're not quite the favourite game we used to be. However, in our Bag we're a regular jolly lot, and no mistake—from ever so many countries, mostly European, though. Some of the foreigners are regular beauties; and yet there are few of them we can't match for looks; and of course, when we come to games, not one of them could beat us English Marbles.

"We have fellows of all colours,—white and black, red and yellow, green and blue. One colour comes from one place, and another from another; for instance, our prettiest green is Mona Marble, from the Isle of Anglesey. And then we've first rate chaps from Derbyshire and Devonshire—some of them variegated, all kinds of colours together.

"What we do is this: when we're hot and tired with a long game we like a little rest, and then we tell our stories turn about—

red one night, black another, and so on. Each fellow says where he comes from; and if any of his belongings have done any great work, isn't he proud?—that's all. I think the whites have the best of it there. See, here is our king of the whites. Now, Carrara, there's a good fellow, you tell them all about your people;—you foreigners are never shy, and somehow we islanders can't help being so."

Carrara instantly rose. Turning first to little Porphyry, who had become almost ruby-red with all he had undergone in being obliged to speak so long, he said:—

"Shy, my friend, why so? Why should the sons of Great Britain be so shy? To be shy is to be fearful, is it not? And yet, methinks, the motto of most Englishmen is, 'I fear God, and know no other fear.' Ah, mon ami, your island race may be shy with each other, and before pretty ladies, as now, but I will tell you where you are *not* shy. See that tall mast in a ship that rocks in the gale; upon its giddy top there is perched a little fellow,—he cannot be more than twelve years old. Is he shy? Ah, no! His eyes are only the brighter, his cheeks the redder,

for the place of peril he is in! See now, again, there is a wall of fire, or a sea of bayonets—at Balakłava, at Inkermann—were you islanders shy there? Dear friends, I am a Sardinian,—my people hear and know about these things."

A little pause, and he continued with rather a theatrical air, swaying himself slightly as he spoke:—

"I said I am Sardinian! Shall I tell you of Genoa? 'Genoa the proud!' Shall I tell you of the mountain on the eastern coast of the Gulf of Genoa, up the face of which, eight hundred feet high, our quarries are worked? Shall I remind you that those quarries were opened in the time of Julius Cæsar; and then shall I bid you consider for a moment how countless have been the noble works of art that have been wrought out of the pure white and precious material that mountain has so long time supplied?

"But not only of my own people would I speak. The little Isle of Paros, in the Grecian Archipelago, bids me remember her, and tell of the 'statue that enchants the world,' which is wrought out of her Marble. Marble, thus

wrought by the hand of genius, becomes so infinitely precious that its value far exceeds its own weight in gold. Of the Marble of Pentheles is the unmatched Parthenon of Athens. Alabaster white as snow, but not like her to melt away,—from out of her, also, what exquisite forms of grace have been conjured by man's cunning hand! Translucent vases, encircled with flowers so life-like in their wondrous beauty, that it would seem as if some magician's wand had swept over a living wreath, and charmed them into that pale and breathless sleep.

"But there are grander works, and Marbles rich in colour. See, now, at Venice the colossal statue of the ancient Roman, once in the Pantheon of Rome; it is sculptured in Marble of a blood-red colour, with thread-like veins and minute spots of white. Of a still darker red is the vast Amphitheatre of Verona. The Cathedral of Milan is of white and grey; and its mighty dome is of a bluish Marble, veined with brown.

"Then, too, there is the brilliant 'Brocade' or Brocatello Marble of Sienna—rich yellow, damasked with spots of deeper hue, with

rings of bluish red and purple;—the rare dark Green, spotted with red and black, and blendings of white;—the Peacock-eyed, with red, white, and blue spots, formed by shells;—the Fire Marble, more brilliant still, with flashes of rainbow hues, fiery red, golden yellow, and brightest green. The 'Landscape Marble' of Florence, where jealous painters would seem to have stolen the sculptor's imperishable tablet, for tower and tree are marked thereon with strokes that time can never efface. Sicilian Jasper is striped, as it were, with ribbons of white, green, and red, interlaced together. Contrasting with our pure white of Carrara, the precious Genoese Marble which adorns Versailles has lustrous yellow veins on a ground of deepest black."

"Och, now, Carrara, if you're beginning on the Black, it's but fair you should let me say the word. Shure there's no one that isn't sinsible that it's our own Kilkenny that bates the world for Black Marble, now at laste, whatever they did in ancient times. Och, it's beautiful enthirely, with white 'petrifactions' on the black, and sometimes the white is a greenish-yellow."

"O Paddy!" burst out from many voices.

"Och, bother," said the Irish Marble, "you're all so mighty sharp. When a boy spakes quick an' natural like, shure he may slip into a mistake at times. I'll tell you what it just is: John Bull mostly keeps his mouth shut, except he's talking politics; and Saunders always makes up his mind on the Monday what he'll say on the Tuesday, and so on through the week. So poor Paddy's niver a chance at all, at all. Now an iver I can't stay to discoorse the matther now.

"I hope, Count, you'll forgive my bad manners in interrupting you. I'm sure we're all much obliged for the iligant news you tould us; 'but,' says a Tipperary boy to me, 'he's just the most beautiful purple you ever saw,' says he; 'shure the Italian Marbles have had it all their own way long enough, so just you spake up for the "ould counthry."'

"You're not to think, ladies dear, that we are all fine Marbles after all. There's some low sort o' chaps called 'Chinese,'—just a sort of a Marble painted with stripes, and vagaries of red, and green, and blue. And then there's 'Agates'—ha, ha, ha!" and the merry little

fellow laughed so heartily that he nearly slipped down into the Bag.

"Bless you, they're not Agates at all, at all. Only think, is it raisinable—a big round Agate to be got for a penny, or a half-penny? Why, they're just coloured *glass*. Shure you all know how glass is made" (many thought it was just possible he did not quite know himself); "well, they're made just in the same way, and very pretty they look. Great baskets full o' them, of all colours, they have in the Crystal Palace, 'like Aladdin's jewel-fruit,' as I heard a lady once say; though how what's not good to eat can be called 'fruit,' is more than I can tell."

With a merry nod, more than a bow, Paddy abruptly sat down; then as quickly rising again, he said—

"After all, I didn't say much about our Black Marbles; but there's one thing I should like to say: we can't boast of such grand palaces and beautiful statues in our Marbles as the Italian fellows can; but, boys, for this you may take my word,—there's ne'er a Marble in all Ireland but would just split into pieces before they'd repate the name of

a countryman who'd showed the coward's back to a foe."

Looking very black indeed at the imaginary enemy, the Black Marble of Kilkenny at last sat down.

The Queen first bestowed an especial smile on the little Count Carrara, as if to compensate him for his sadly abrupt interruption; and then she gave Paddy a smile also,—as much as to say, that when fighting was to be done she was sure the "boys" of ould Ireland would never be behind hand.

An elegant-looking Purse, of netted white silk and steel beads, with a delicate clasp and fairy-like chain of brilliantly cut steel, and a tassel of the same, was next summoned.

Accustomed, evidently, to drawing-room society, it was with graceful self-possession that the *White Silk Purse* arose, and in a low and softly modulated voice she began.

VI.

THE STORY OF A WHITE SILK PURSE.

"Of foreign birth and lowly parentage, the produce of a Chinese worm cannot but marvel to find herself here, fashioned by a fair English lady's hands into the pretty Purse you see, its delicate meshes destined to contain glittering coins of silver and of gold. But ere this period of blissful rest could arrive, and my mission of joy be begun, much toil, and pain, and disquiet was my appointed portion; and, believe me, no rest is so sweet as that which succeeds some useful labour.

"The past seems like a troubled dream, of which only a few broken memories now survive. The grey mists of a tearful morning are lost in the sunshine of a glad noontide; and such has been the cloudless serenity of my latter years, passed in the luxurious repose of a work-table drawer. There, as I lay undisturbed, I loved to listen to my gentle mistress reading aloud to her blind husband,

or carrying on with him, and her many friends, conversations of much and varied interest. I have lived so much of late in the lives of others, that I seem almost to have lost my own identity; but out of such shadowy recollections as may linger still, with some information gathered from others, I may, perhaps, furnish a few interesting notices of Silk; at least, I will do my best, and trust to your indulgence if I fail.

"Chinese by birth, it was by English machinery, guided by English hands, that my strong yet delicately fine cord was made. Of the 'silk throwing mill,' where the imported 'raw silk' is wound off; and the 'spinning-mill,' where to the silken filaments, too fragile for use in their natural state, the necessary strength is given by twisting them single or double,—of these processes what shall I say?

"It seems almost impossible to me to attempt a short description of each wonderful apparatus of bobbins and reels, of rods and rings, spindles and pulleys, wheels within wheels, and lever-boards, by which the imprisoned giant steam is made, like Hercules of old, to do woman's work and *spin*. Rather

would I go back to my earliest stage of all; for mechanism, full of wonder and interest as it is, must yield in wonder and interest to the productions of things that have life. The wonders of Nature ever surpass the wonders of art.

"Do you care to know the little silkworm's grand entomological name?—Bombyx Mori. It knows no mother's care. The tiny eggs are hatched by the hot rays of the sun, or by artificial heat.

"In almost every child's life there is a time when rearing silkworms is a delight. It is their pleasure to supply incessant food to the voracious little creature, and then, all wondering, to gaze as it weaves for itself its golden shroud.

"One would not exactly wish to see the unnatural phenomenon," said the pretty Purse with a smile, "of an old head on young shoulders; but if ever such a thing did occur, what a useful lesson may be learned by a wise child from his greedy pets! Regarding theirs as *mental* food, how admirable the indefatigable perseverance with which they devour the necessary aliment, making the lasting provision which must sustain them when, after

twenty-five or thirty days, their life will assume a different phase. Then must they spin from what they have stored up; and beautiful exceedingly is the silvery white, or paly gold of the precious filament they have thus enabled themselves to produce. Then comes a graver lesson still. They have clothed themselves with their own works, which, good or bad, as a garment must cling about them till they die.

"For fifteen or twenty days the silkworm neither feeds nor works; its labours are accomplished, and it rests. And then the cerements are burst, and the creature comes forth into a higher order of being. No longer to creep and crawl upon the ground, not now is the earth its dwelling-place, but fitted with light wings, it soars into the air!

"But its precious legacy, its *work*, is left behind; and empresses and queens are proud to possess the product of a little worm.

"The moth of the silkworm is of a creamy white, its upper wings barred with pale brown. In the countries where the rearing of silkworms employs a vast number of human beings, only a few of these little creatures are

allowed to complete their destiny, and issue forth as moths from their silken shrouds. These quickly die, after the female has laid an enormous number of eggs; but the greater part are destroyed while in their chrysalis state, to save the silk from the injury of the insect eating its way through. The warm water into which the cocoons are thrown loosens their gluey varnish, and the silk, when reeled off, measures on an average three hundred yards.

"Can you guess how many of these industrious worms perish in their lustrous shrouds, that one lady may wear a silken dress?

"Sixteen yards of plain 'Gros de Naples' can be woven out of one pound of reeled silk. Twelve pounds of cocoons will supply this quantity of silk; and in those twelve pounds three hundred and sixty thousand worms are counted.

"For a silk dress bestowed on Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII. gave twelve shillings a yard,—equal to five guineas of the present day; and now silk may be purchased for half-a-crown a yard, and five guineas would be the cost of a really handsome dress.

"The imports of 'raw silk' into England are increasing every year. A few years back the amount was five millions of pounds. In 1857 it exceeded twelve millions. England is supplied with 'raw silk' (as it is called when in its natural state, before it is twisted and spun into thicker threads) in different proportions from China, India, Italy, France, Turkey, and the Cape. But from 'Seres,' the ancient name for the Chinese, they say our name is derived.

"Silks from China were displayed by Pompey and Julius Cæsar, in their magnificent spectacles in Rome. And earlier still, from there came also the so-called 'Median robes," extolled by the ancient Greeks. In the time of the emperors silk was sold in Rome for its own weight in gold.

"Greece was the first rival to China. In the sixth century, a few silkworm eggs, concealed from the jealous Chinese in the hollow of a cane, were brought to Constantinople by two Nestorian monks. Hatched in a dung heap, the worms were fed as in their native land, on mulberry leaves. Under the auspices of Justinian the new art of rearing silkworms

flourished, and quickly spread with the manufacture of silk from Constantinople to Athens, Corinth, and Thebes.

"Italy came next. In the twelfth century a king of Sicily established a factory at Palermo. His artisans were prisoners of war carried off by him from the Holy Land. In Spain, where, with many other flourishing trades, it was introduced by the Moors, it quickly died out when left to native—want of—industry.

"In France it prospered soon, and prospers still. But the mulberry-trees, on which the valuable little workers depend for food, are not hardy enough to brave those stormy winds of England, which only serve to root your native oaks.

"If I might venture to adapt the lines of one of your poets to this subject, I would say—

> 'Let sunnier regions boast, nor envy ye
> The silken harvest, or prolific tree;
> While by your oaks the precious loads are borne,
> And realms commanded which those trees adorn.'

Quietly then the Purse shrank back from further observation beneath the shadow of the green branch to which she was attached.

Not far from the White Silk Purse there hung another purse also of silk, but very different in appearance. Instead of an open network, this was a substantial fabric of "close crochet," which, from its very peculiar style of colouring, might be described as a quaint-looking article.

Stripes of every imaginable hue—rainbow colouring, but by no means arranged in rainbow-like order—gave to the *Harlequin Purse* a really comical appearance.

But he seemed to glory in his peculiarity, and wore his glittering gold slides and his long shining tassels with an air of being extremely well satisfied with his appearance. Some of the coloured bands of which he was composed were of variegated silks, and here and there on the darker stripes of plain colours were stitches of gold and silver thread, which shimmered brightly whenever he swayed himself into the fire-light. Altogether, he certainly was a remarkable-looking personage.

His powers of mimicry were evidently very great, for every now and then, during the evening, some staid-looking individual—the

Case of knitting-needles, for instance—had been startled by hearing some very absurd remark, uttered so exactly in her own voice and manner, that she felt absolutely frightened. But, on looking round for the suspected culprit, it seemed perfectly certain that it could not have been the Harlequin Purse, for was he not at that very moment engaged in a quiet and apparently sensible conversation with his nearest neighbour?

Some of the little people, however, must have discovered the secret, for they never ceased to regard him with especial attention, and seemed ready, at his slightest movement, to go off into fits of laughter. It was, therefore, by no means to their satisfaction when, on his rising in obedience to the sign of the sceptre, he (the veriest wag of the party) gravely announced his intention of "as far as he was able contributing to the interesting fund of general information which" (but he said it with a mischievous twinkle of the eye) "he congratulated the company on being supplied with from the histories of those present."

It may have been that the extreme quietness

of the last speaker had somewhat impressed him, or that he instinctively felt that, in such company as he then was, any open "tom-foolery" would have been out of place;—at any rate, the old gentleman's Walking-stick could not have looked more sedate and sober than did the gay Purse with stripes of many colours when he began to speak.

VII.

THE STORY OF A HARLEQUIN PURSE.

"My pretty friend, if I may venture to call her so, our skeins of silk having been together for a few days in the same drawer in the shop of the Golden Ball, Pall-Mall, has so charmingly laid before us the principal sources of interest connected with silk, that it were needless for me to add a word thereto, especially when moments are precious. I grieve to see how far already the hands of the inexorable clock have progressed. I would rather seek to open out new ground as rapidly as I may.

"Colour! what a glorious theme! how infinite in interest and beauty! Who does not confess its charm? The azure sea and golden sunset sky; the fern leaf's matchless green; the rose's blushing cheek;—of such the colouring is of an Almighty hand, and, as such, surpassing the proudest achievements of men. But the human eye craves colour too eagerly

not to seek out from the storehouse of nature some means of imitating such lovely dyes.

"See, now, how curious have been men's eyes; how busy, too, their hands!

"Centuries on centuries ago, when the 'fishing place' of Tyre was queen of the world's commerce, on her coasts lay small shell-fish (*Buccinum lapillus* and others). In the throat of each little animal was one *purple* drop, and garments dipped in these precious drops were counted amongst the treasures of kings, for the glorious hue was unfading. The Grecian conquerors bore from the palace of the kings of Persia cloths of Tyrian purple fresh and lustrous in their beauty, although dyed nearly two centuries before.

"For a pound of wool dipped in this costly dye the luxurious Romans in Augustus' reign gave a hundred crowns (£30 of our money). But emperors grudged their subjects such a luxury, and the Cæsars assumed to themselves alone the right to wear purple robes. To be 'born in the purple' thus signified to be of royal birth.

"Let us now turn to the inhabitants of Britain in days when they were without a

commerce or a navy. Wolves' skins and tin were all they had to offer the merchant-vessels of Phœnicia for what they brought from their world-famous mart. To the fleets of Tyre, and to the Roman conquerors, when they came, the naked bodies of the rude islanders looked strange, for they were stained of a deep *blue*. More than eighteen centuries have gone by, and delicate muslins, lustrous silks, and warm woollen stuffs, worn by the daughters of England now, are still of the same blue. From the lowly plant of woad (*Isatis tinctoria*) with its panicles of small yellow flowers, men gather still the long leaves of lucid green for the dyer's bath; but with it is now joined a plant from the far East, called indigo. This, too, was known to the ancients as a pigment or surface-colouring matter; but slowly did it win its way into Europe. England, Germany, and France sternly prohibited the invaluable stranger, so long prized amongst Oriental nations. At Nuremberg the dyers of the city were compelled each year solemnly to abjure its use; and now—England annually imports from her Indian empire upwards of seven millions of pounds. In the new world

grows another species of indigo, and centuries ago, in Mexico, the ancient Aztec race dyed their garments of cotton with its beautiful and lasting blue.*

"But now, for Old England's 'meteor flag,' we must have a glorious *red*.

"As her gallant sons have given, so, too, would her loving daughters give their heart's blood willingly, ere any see the Red Cross banner pale!"

This was irresistible, and a cheer burst forth simultaneously from both red jackets and blue.

The Harlequin Purse continued,—

"Without, however, proceeding to such extreme measures, we may obtain an admirable *red* from the roots of a plant with spikes of starry yellow flowers, called dyers' madder (*Rubia tinctoria*). A native also of the south of Europe, it flourishes best in the Levant, whence came the 'Turkey red,' the secret of which was unknown to English dyers till the end of the last century. Madder roots were used by the ancient Greeks medicinally.

* The term "blue devils" is said to have arisen from the belief, gravely announced by some ancient authors, that the dyers in indigo suffered from melancholy, as the dyers in scarlet were supposed to become choleric.

"But even the 'Turkey red' shows dull beside the bright crimson of the fuchsia and the glowing scarlet of the geranium, and men craved a more brilliant colour still.

"In the far western world, when the nopal plant (*Cactus opuntia*) had ripened its red fruits, and on its rigid leaves were countless insects feeding—children of the sun, hatched by its genial rays—man, with his curious gaze and busy hands, came by, and swept them in tens of thousands away. They looked so like grey withered grains of barley, it was doubtful at first whether they were insects or seeds; but the dyes of rich *crimson* and vivid *scarlet* were secured, and the glad painter dipped his brush in carmine.

"Little Pencil," said the Harlequin Purse, suddenly changing his tone, "here is a sum for you: 700,000 lbs. of this cochineal are brought to Europe annually, and each pound contains 70,000 insects. Tell me how many little creatures die each year that such a splendid colour may be produced as my scarlet stripe displays.

"But must we not match the sunflower and the marigold? They will not themselves af-

ford us the fitting dye, but there is a humble-looking plant that will, related to sweet mignonette, and very much resembling her, with long spikes of yellowish-green flowers with brown seeds. Behold the 'dyer's weed' (*Reseda luteola*), or weld! A native of our isles, growing on waste places and on stony ground, it gives a golden *yellow*.

"There is yet another chief amongst yellow dyes—*Quercitron*, the bark of the 'black oak,' one of the largest trees of North America.

"We have no Tyrian dye, yet *purple* we must have, and *violet* is the natural dye of the logwood, a native of Honduras. The tree resembles our hawthorn, but its flowers are pale yellow. The colouring matter is in the wood, which is of a deep orange red in colour. It is brought in large blocks to England, many thousand tons' weight annually; yet once it, too, like indigo, was prohibited. In Queen Elizabeth's reign it was ordered to be burned wherever found, as a 'deceitful dye,' because unskilful dyers knew not then how to treat it.

"From the roots of the white water lily (*Nymphea alba*), which, in Egypt anciently,

and in Sweden still, are eaten as substitutes for corn—the Irish and Scotch obtain beautiful shades of *brown*. The same sober hue is yet more largely obtained from the green husks of the walnut (*Juglans regia*), so long the useful friend of man in many countries of Europe, that one almost forgets it was a native of Persia.

"And the mourning dye—alas! the most wanted of all,—where shall the sorrowful *black* be found? Flowers and leaves have none.

"Come again, in your need, to the insect world, O man! There, where you find your brightest of hues, you shall find wherewith to make fast your funereal dye.

"Gall-wasps puncture the leaves and leaf-stalks of a kind of oak (*Quercus infectoria*), a native of the Levant, there to deposit their eggs. The juice of the tree forms around each a spongy nut. When the creatures are hatched, they eat their way through, and fly away. 'Aleppo galls'* are gathered not only to be

* Within the last few years much anxiety has been occasioned in the south-western counties of England (extending even into Hampshire), by the fact that these galls are now to be found upon our young oaks. Whether the insect has been introduced from the East, or whether the disease has arisen from other causes, has not been positively determined. It is at least certain, that the growth of trees so infected has been seriously affected, and that few if any acorns are borne by them.

used with logwood and a preparation of iron in dyeing black, but to be employed also in many other dyes, and in making ink.

"But *green*, shall it be forgotten? the almost universal colour in nature, the most infinite in its variety of shade, and the most enduring. The gold and purple of the sunset skies, how quickly they fade into grey! The crimson rose is but for a few short hours, but its green leaves long remain. The blue sea itself is changeful of hue, and sometimes wears an emerald brightness; and wherever we look on land, some fold of Nature's green robe is seen, in velvet turf, tall tree, or tender herb.

"But here man's curious eyes and busy hands are at fault. In the kingdoms of science and art the most diligent explorers meet often with closed doors, and on their thresholds they are forced to read, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no further.'—The shout of man's triumph is heard on every side; but we also hear the impatient cry of baffled inquiry.

"And so it is," said the Harlequin Purse, with one of his rapid changes of voice and manner,—"so it is, dear friends, that unless you choose a dress from the very wardrobe of

Dame Nature herself,—a cloak of ivy or a mantle of ferns,—you cannot have one dyed green at once. Human hands must first in the *blue* bath, then in the *yellow*, dip the cloths which they desire should be green.

"I fear to weary, yet still more I fear to mislead," said he, resuming his former quiet demeanour; "so perhaps I should tell you that animal fibres, silk and wool, and vegetable fibres, linen and cotton, require in dyeing different treatment.

"I have spoken of but a very few out of many colouring matters which dyers possess, some suiting best with silk and wool, and some with linen and cotton.

"Did the little ones ever hear of the cloth of woollen *warp* (lengthway threads) and cotton *weft* (crossway threads), which was dipped into a scarlet dye,—the woollen threads came out a vivid red, the cotton threads remained white! Cotton refuses to receive cochineal, but for madder red it shows a strong affinity. Again, a woollen cloth will become deep blue if dipped into the indigo bath, which will scarcely change the colour of silk.

"I have attempted but to give you a hasty eep, as it were, through the great kaleido-ope of the dyer, whose numerous materials re rendered innumerable by constant modifica-ons and combinations. In the Crystal Palace f 1851, there was a French shawl which, on ground of silver and gold, displayed two undred and forty shades of colour! Amongst e British contributions was a state bed, pestry-worked, the foot-board representing e Aurora of Guido. In this exquisite piece work, in tent stitch on fine canvas, the oollen threads, single and twisted together, ere of seven hundred shades of colour!

"One other word. Colouring matters are stinguished as *subjective* and *adjective*. Fear t, little ones, no grammar lesson lurks in ait for you. The former are such as will of emselves give the colour required, as indigo d woad. The latter require the cloths to be epared by 'mordants,' or preparations to ite in,' and keep the colour fixed. Madder d weld are adjective dyes. The colour it-lf is also acted upon by the mordant. Hop-g I have not wearied you, I bid you now st heartily farewell."

With a profound bow, clinking his tassels together, with the manner of one who loves to hear the jingle of his spurs, the Harlequin Purse resumed his seat.

More than half of the allotted time had now gone by, so that the curiosity and excitement of the company were proportionably increased as to which of those yet remaining should receive the honour of selection. Not that with all it was a desired honour; some were unfeigned in their wish to be overlooked. For instance, the Meerschaum, with mouth-piece of amber,—though certainly from no feeling of bashfulness; but he thought it would be "a hawwid boa, a moth undeniable noothanth." The Travelling-bag (so far as such a self-satisfied personage could be), was rather in a fright lest she should be called upon to give an account of herself and her belongings, remembering how various were the subjects of which she ought to have at least some notion—leather, ivory, gold, silver, steel, emery, china, &c., &c. It was not with her that real modesty which shrinks not from confessing where it is ignorant; for the Travelling-bag

ould on no subject confess to a lack of knowdge. Quickly, too, as she was accustomed to e "down upon" others when mistaken, it vas with real, though not apparent, trepidaion that she considered a failure on her part could scarcely hope for much indulgence.

But, besides these, there were many who from real timidity coveted not the distinction of the sceptre's sign; and amongst them, none, perhaps, was more unwilling to be summoned than the individual now chosen—Una, the lovely Pearl.

Exquisite in shape and colour, the pear-shaped jewel hung from the centre of a row of small round Pearls. The string, just of sufficient size to encircle the neck, was clasped by a Carbuncle of an oval shape. Its narrow, thread-like setting of gold was scarcely perceptible in the rich red rays that flashed from the lustrous gem, whose fiery glow approved the name bestowed on it by the Romans of "Little Coal."

There could not have been a more popular selection. "The Pearl, the Pearl," was whispered from one to the other. The looks of all were eager. Many bent forward to catch, if possible,

one glimpse of her; others stood on tip-toe; and those on the opposite side of the Tree peeped through its branches, or swung themselves round as far as the length of their cords would allow.

Even the old cronies in the grate, the Wood and Coals, were excited,—truth to tell, they had been rather regardless of the late speakers.

Some of the Coals, indeed, after a low crooning, had actually fallen asleep, and only awoke to find themselves falling with clattering noise into the fender. Now rousing themselves up, they broke forth into a cheery blaze, and in the warmer glow thus diffused through the room, beautiful exceedingly looked the fair Pearl.

As she trembled in the fire-light, an exquisite play of colour passed over her usually pale cheek; and when the Penholder smiled and noded affectionately towards her, all were struck by the likeness, not always so apparent, between the lovely mother and daughter.

At this moment the quick-eared sailors caught the sound of approaching footsteps. The boatswain raised his whistle to his lips, but hesitated to give the appointed signal, for

e footsteps were those of only one person, d did not, therefore, betoken that important ent—the coming of the company of which shrill call was to utter the note of warn- g. Nodding, therefore, to a little Drummer nding near, he quickly gave him to under- nd, by means of a slight pantomime, what was he wanted; and instantly a low tap on drum gave sufficient notice to all present at silence was to be preserved.

A hand was heard at the handle of the or, the key turned in the lock, and the usekeeper of Seacombe Manor entered.

With the usual portly presence of those who, housekeepers, must therefore be the best uainted with every means of comfort with- the house, Mrs. Saunders combined the therly look of her earlier calling,—that of a se. She was by no means a fine lady, l, alas! in the way of education, she was idedly deficient. Good old creature, some her consequential compeers in neighbouring tles and halls looked down upon her, refore, as "old fashioned in manners and ss, and so illiterate." But for all that, was twice as lovable as themselves, and

no living being could have been more trustworthy.

It was a thousand pities that in her young days she had not had the advantage of better "schooling," for the nursery was her decided vocation. To her there was no music like the silvery laughter of children, no sunshine like the bright eyes and beaming smiles of happy little ones! But, alas! her only defect was, in a nurse, an important one—what she herself described as her "hunfortenate want of heddication." Objectionable grammar was of minor consequence, that not being an infectious malady, but her misuse of the letter H unquestionably was so; and this defect was also the more incurable, because it was an unconscious one. Dear good old soul that she was, not intentionally would she have misused even a letter.

So warmly attached was the mother, as well as the children, to their nurse, that for a long time Lady Mowbray tried not to hear when the faithful creature in all simplicity warned the little ones that their soup was "too *'ot* to *heat*," or assured her ladyship "that the beautiful *hare* in the cliffs made Miss Geraldine has 'ungry has an 'unter."

But at last the crisis came. The identical Geraldine, the "'ungry little 'unter" having been allowed, at the special request of her grandmother, to appear at dessert, asked her mother in her sweet, eager, little voice, if she might "heat" the peach her grandmother had given to her.

The stately dowager's puzzled look gave way at last to one of horror as she caught the whispered correction, "Say *eat*, my darling." Aghast she listened, while her gentle daughter-in-law pleaded, in excuse, how in every other respect the children's nurse was faultless. Sir Edward was appealed to, the fiat went forth, and poor Saunders was deposed from the nursery chair of state,—to be installed, however, with especial honour, in the throne of the housekeeper's room.

Poor Saunders, this was trial number one. Trial two was harder still to bear.

She looked not like the heroine of a story; yet no kindly heart could have learned the "ower true" history of that stout, more than middle-aged woman, without feeling irresistibly drawn towards her and warmly interested in her. Pleasant was she to look upon with

her cheery smile, and honest, clear brown eyes; but for all that, there was in her heart a sorrowful gap no time ever could fill up.

A garden, where the fair flowers of affection and hope have long been cherished, cannot be rooted up without a sad show of desolation.

An engagement of eighteen years suddenly broken off, from no cause but the fickleness of man's nature succumbing to the wiles of a younger rival, could not but make poor Hester Saunders look on life with graver eyes.

Neither delicately featured nor delicately brought up, yet no patrician damsel could have been more delicate in feeling; and with all womanly modesty and womanly pride, Hester buried her dead hopes out of sight.

The fountain of her abounding tenderness, forced from that deeper, narrower channel, where it had so long silently flowed, now spread abroad in countless shining streams of kindly offices of love. Kind looks, and words, and deeds had she for every living creature; but the pride of her heart, the delight of her eyes, was "Miss Hider," as she called the hazel-eyed damsel with nut-brown hair and coral lips, who had dressed the Christmas Tree.

In her almost idolatry of the child, to whom, when a sickly babe, she had been appointed the especial nurse, Saunders, with a blind and deaf partiality, and an utter disregard to justice, which at last every one had ceased hopelessly to combat, attributed to her "blessed Miss Hider" every imaginable and unimaginable perfection. Whatever was done in the family that was good, kind, or clever, Saunders was convinced in her own mind, and often with an expressive nod of the head assured her confidants, that "she'd lay anything Miss Hider was at the bottom of it."

With an amusing show of justice she would willingly agree that "Miss Josephine was a pretty dear;" that all the Misses Mowbray, great and small, "were charming young ladies; the boys, fine young gentlemen;" "Master as clever as a houseful of books," and "her ladyship, kindness itself." But though she could not always venture to assert, she at least insinuated, and firmly believed herself, that whatever special act was then upheld for approbation, was in some manner attributable to "that blessed Miss Hider's" influence.

Wholly indescribable, therefore, was her

state of intense glorification as she gazed on the magnificent Tree, which did, indeed, greatly owe its brilliant appearance to the exquisite taste with which her darling had arranged her almost embarrassing wealth of materials. Except little Zeffie, Ida had been without helpers, her brothers and sisters being engaged with the large party of young people staying in the house, for the greater part of whom the Tree was intended as a surprise.

Again and again did Mrs. Saunders walk around the beautiful Tree, gazing upon its heavily-laden branches with dazzled and delighted eyes. The tables, too, were eagerly surveyed. The magic scene rendered her for a time speechless, and then she burst forth:—

"There's ne'er another young lady in all Hengland could have done it! Why, it's like the work of a fairy! God bless her, pretty dear;—and she's just as hunconscious as a baby how clever and beautiful she is.

"Why, she'll come from her German or her French, or playing the piany, or doing a helegant picture, as merry as a kitten, to peep into my room. Running in to throw her pretty harms round my neck, she'll say,

Well, dear Saunders,' or 'Dear Hetty, how's he rheumatism to-day?' or, 'I hope you aven't spoiled the apricot jam, you good old hing,' or one pleasant word or another, just to nake my old heart dance to the music of her 'oice—blessings on the sweet lamb.

"I wonder which of hall these beautiful hings will come to her share. Dear, dear! I vish I had the picking and choosing for her; ›ut there, whatever it is, she'll be content, for ı happy-tempered creature she is, which no-›ody can deny! I'd dearly like myself for ıer to have that lovely Pearl Necklace, and ;he sweet little Watch, and —. But, dearie ne! I've not given a look to the fire yet, and [mustn't stay staring and wishing here. Bless my heart alive, is that clock right, I wonder! And I haven't laid out the dessert yet; and won't old Cox be in a way? Well, sure enough, Time does fly, whatever burden he may have on his back."

Having cast more coals and wood into the huge grate, already glowing like a great furnace, Mrs. Saunders prepared to depart, yet lingered, a little shyly as it seemed.

"Well, sure enough, it isn't fit to put

amongst Diamonds and Pearls, and such like; but she won't mind, the darling, what it is, so that it is from any one she loves; and she does love me, I know for certain. I wonder if she'll guess who it's from? I'll just put an S in the corner, and then she's sure to find out."

Taking up a small parcel, wrapped in brown paper, from a chair where she had laid it on going to make her tour of inspection, she went to the writing-table.

With some trepidation the delicate Lady Penelope felt herself seized by the housekeeper's rather rough hand, and slowly and awkwardly guided into forming a rather shapeless S on the cover already bearing an address:

"To Miss Hider,
From a Well-wisher, with her
duty and love."

The parcel was then carefully laid on one of the tables, and the good woman reluctantly leaving the room, which seemed to her like fairy-land, closed the door at length and locked it as before.

Some indignant spluttering, and rather

ıgry and impatient pushing and jostling, had ɔt unnaturally taken place in the grate as esh Coals were thrown upon those already in ɔssession of the warmest corners. But, while rs. Saunders was present, of course not a ord could be said, and the moment she had ft the room the Queen signed to the Pearl commence her story without delay.

VIII.

THE STORY OF AN ORIENTAL PEARL.

"If to be known by many names is (as some say) a proof of being loved by many, then am I fortunate indeed, for I might tire you in repeating all mine. Individually called 'Una,' my family name is, in England, Pearl; and with many nations the soft sounding name is but slightly varied,—Perle, Perla, and Perlü. But the name by which, perhaps, I am most widely known is Margarita and the mother-shell, Meleagrina Margaritifera.

"As Margaritæ we adorned the Cæsars' purple robes in ancient Rome, and in the very wantonness of luxury were dissolved in the drinking-cups of their sumptuous feasts.

"Are human beings wiser now; or is it not still as in those by-gone days that precious Pearls, jewels that might have been 'a joy for ever,' are sometimes crushed but to afford one short, delirious draught?

"Counted amongst 'the treasures of the

ep,' the restless sea waves, typical ever of
en's lives, have whispered to me much that,
ere any of that race beside me now, I would
ive, though humbly, to repeat. But sure
I that thoughtful men and women do prize
beyond our mere beauty, for the lovely
sons that they learn from us.

"Coveted by all, by all deemed 'precious,'
t see, dear friends, where are we found? In
oubled waters. What brings us forth? A
uised shell. What do we symbolize? Tears.
et in the Holy Book men read, the gates of
aven are of Pearls.

"Forgive me if I seem too grave—I will no
nger dwell on such thoughts. I have a little
ster here from the far North,—we call her
Scotch Margaret;' as stories sometimes teach
here sermons fail, she will tell you a tale to
ow how in men's lives 'wisdom, more pre-
ous than Pearls,' is ofttimes born of suffer-
g.

"I too, like Coralie, am a daughter of Ocean;
it in vain does he cast his mighty arms
ound me, for man is mightier still, and
herever we are known to exist we are
rested from his bosom. Sometimes the ex-

treme of covetousness in these lords of the creation brings its own punishment.

"In the new world, the sunlit waters on either side of the Isthmus of Panama were once rich in the precious shells where Pearls are found. In such abundance did they yield their treasures to the Spanish conquerors, that in one year Seville imported six hundred and ninety-seven pounds of Pearl, some of them of great beauty. But the hands of the gold-seekers, red with the blood of their fellow-men, while devastating the lovely lands where the palm-tree, the plantain, and the maize were the best riches of the simple inhabitants, were alike unsparing beneath the waters, and alike ruthless to the miserable race of Pearl-fishers. The poor Indians, insufficiently fed, and forced into the sea half senseless with cruel blows, oftentimes never reappeared, falling a helpless prey to the hungry sharks; while the Pearl-banks themselves, unceasingly stripped of their shells, soon became exhausted. Land and water, cursed by the Spaniards' greed of gain, alike lay desolate.

"Not so in the East. The Pearl-fishery of the Arabian Catifa (the modern El Katiff), more

han eighteen centuries ago supplied Cleopatra vith Pearls for her boastful cup (one reckless raught costing upwards of £80,000), and was till prosperous in the seventeenth century. 'rom thence was produced the matchless pear-haped Pearl which was purchased by the hah of Persia for £110,000, and proudly dis-layed by him to the French jewel merchant, 'avernier. At Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf, lso renowned in times past, is the largest 'earl-fishery in the world. The annual amount f wealth which it pours into the city is esti-ıated at £240,000. The Looloo Isles are so famous for their shells of Mother-of-pearl.

"The Arabs love their 'Looloo' best when ıe has a golden tinge. They say she is then pe, and will never change colour. The pure hite 'Mootie' of the Hindoo, after which ıey name the queenliest of their temple domes, liable to darken with age.

"But I have yet to tell you of my own pecial birth-place. Who has not heard of an chanting isle, the fond natives of which ast themselves of its having been the site of len—that garden of delight that man no ɔre may reach, but through the portals of

the grave?—an island of which the learned naturalist of ancient Rome extolled the 'pure gold and peerless pearls,'—an island crowned with the never-dying palm, and countless jewels glistening at her feet, she sitteth as a queen upon the sunlit waves, while from her cinnamon groves the spicy odours float afar, and weary mariners forget their toil if but they catch one breath from Ceylon's lovely isle.

"But I forget. I have but to tell you of myself, and how men reach us on our coral beds six fathoms deep and more.

"Found as we are in such different localities, the times and seasons of the fisheries, and the customs of the divers, must in a measure vary. I will but tell you of those I know best—of my own most beautiful Ceylon.

"With Pearls, as with Corals, there are appointed fishing-grounds for successive years. Certain divisions are made of the great Pearl-banks stretching between the island and the great continent of India. The principal of these divisions lie about twenty miles from shore opposite Condatchy.

"This spot, a desert all the year through ex-

ıt in February and March, is then alive with ısure-seekers ;—an ever-shifting, miscellan- ıs crowd of people, from all countries, of ny tongues, and many colours, of every dation of rank, and infinite variety of upation, yet all connected with the search and the attainment of Pearls.

'Some are drawn by business, and some by iosity. The merchant is there, and the tra- er, and busy native workmen of various ds. Amongst them there are some whose der fingers will delicately polish us with glistening powder obtained by crushing small seed Pearls ;—in this resembling chief of precious stones, that it is only ı our own kind that we receive such ser- . But the perfecting of Pearls is not of ı; no human hand can enhance our natural ıty. So far, at least, we surpass all other s, that, except to drill a hole through those ch are to be strung as beads, no tool ıan approaches us.

Still in the East (as it once used to be in land), crushed powder of Pearls is eagerly ht by the credulous natives as an unfail- remedy in cases of illness.

"But, hark! the gun fires. 'Tis sunset, and the boats are launched, each with its twenty men,—ten to row, and ten to dive. The divers, five at a time, go down into the deep. Night passes, but when the sparkling waves are kissed by the rosy morn, the diving will commence. See at the water's edge a dark-browed conjurer stands muttering incessant prayers, his body writhing in contortions without end; and so he must continue until the boat to which he is attached returns from its treasure quest.

"Out of their scanty earnings the poor divers pay him well. In that senseless mummery performed by one as powerless as themselves, they hope to find their safeguard against a peril, which, brave, and desperately brave as they often are, yet haunts their imaginations with a sickening dread.

"Short-lived and suffering are these wretched men, yet never does the adventurous band want for recruits. They make from forty to fifty plunges in a day, bringing up perhaps a hundred shells at a time. But remaining under water for one minute, two, four, five minutes, has a terrible effect on the human

ne. When the divers come up, not only
:er, but sometimes blood, pours from their
trils, mouths, and ears. But of this they
ɜ no heed. In the blue waters themselves
ıe only enemy they dread—the fierce and
l ground shark. Against this hideous
'dian of the treasures of the deep they
w no means of protecting themselves, ex-
by implicit confidence in, and obedience
ıe conjurer, or 'Binder of sharks.' On his
osed supernatural power they wholly rely,
sometimes the cunning deceiver is bribed
ıe promise of a precious Pearl to go in
boat with them.

But see, the rowers have reached their ap-
ed place. In the bottom of the boat are
ıuge red stones. Through a hole in each
ɜ has been passed. Each diver seizes a
with the toes of his right foot; with those
ɜ left he snatches a net-work bag; with
ght hand he grasps a rope; with his left
ses his nostrils (sometimes with wax);
l weighted by the huge red stone, he
ly sinks to the bottom. His bag he
ıangs round his neck, and rapidly—oh,
r! not daring to glance around, lest the

monster he dreads may be near—he fills his bag with all the shells he can collect. Generally speaking, in about two minutes he pulls the rope, which his right hand has never let go, and is swiftly drawn up again into the boat.

"When noontide arrives, again the gun fires, and, with colours flying, the boats return with their treasure to the shore.

"But the shells are fast closed; the oyster within is yet alive, and to force the shell open with violence might injure the Pearl that lies hidden within. Fain would I hurry over the next scene, for it is horrible to recollect.

"The Pearl shells are put into pits dug in the earth, where mats are spread to receive them. They are left there till the creatures within them die, and the shells opening of themselves, will allow of the Pearls being safely removed. But the stench of the dead and dying animals poisons the air for miles around, and the poor divers, escaped from the perils of the deep, are exposed on shore to the horrors of pestilence. Imagine to yourselves the scene of excitement, when from the loathsome heap men snatch out gems of inestimable

value. Sometimes the unopened shells are disposed of in a sort of lottery. In one oyster one hundred and fifty Pearls have been found, including the very small ones called Seed Pearl. The fairest gems, they say, are those not attached to the shell, but taken from the animal itself.

"How may I attempt to explain, in few words, the mystery of our birth? Not disease, —but suffering and patience bring us forth! The chemist and the microscope have shown the secret of our composition—alternate layers of *membrane* (animal substance), and carbonate of lime (mineral substance) or *nacre*, the lustrous internal coating of the shell. These layers are slowly and successively produced by the animal itself. And why? Some injury has happened to the outside of the shell, and the hole must be filled up; or a grain of sand or other irritating substance has entered inside the shell (sometimes by the cunning design of man), and this must be covered over, that it may no longer wound,—and lo, the result! By a creature ranking amongst the lowest in the scale of intelligence is produced a marvel of beauty—an incomparable gem, to glisten in a monarch's diadem, and to be the poet's

symbol for all that is most precious and most pure.

"I seem to have said but little where there is so much to say, but our time counts by minutes now; and I would not have you miss our little 'Scotch Margaret's' tale.

"You will learn from her that Scotland has its Pearls; and so has also Ireland and Wales; and so had England once, for we read of a buckler incrusted with British Pearls, which Julius Cæsar carried to Rome, and there hung up in the Temple of Venus, the ocean-born goddess of beauty and love.

"But England now, whose empire girds the globe, needs not to search for Pearls on her own coasts. Let her happy islands ever be the cradle of brave sons and virtuous daughters. They shall be as the Roman matron's children were,—her priceless jewels.

"Queen of the seas, the willing waves will bring to her all that she needs, and far off realms, handmaids of every clime, will minister to her every want.

"Is it her robing time? See dusky India kneels as she presents the jewel-casket and the silken robe; Australia clasps round waist

and arm the girdle and the bracelet of pure gold; and Canada brings the ermine mantle, pure as new fallen snow.

"Is it her banquet hour? Her loving children will again press around, and with them many a submissive nation waits, eager to fill the cup or serve the dainty dish.

"Dear England! for these many gifts the Giver asks but one return. Be faithful to thy trust. Unfold thy Red Cross banner *everywhere. Wouldst thou have faithful children?—teach them the Christian's faith!*

"Did I say men looked not now to England's shores for Pearls? Is it not the secret of her glad home peace, that the many there have found the 'Pearl of great price?' All have not seen it yet;—let her hold it forth to all.

"I plead for her children in the East, amongst whom are those who go down into deep waters to bring up for her such perishing Pearls as myself."

IX.

"SCOTCH MARGARET'S" STORY.

"I MIND me 'twas a simmer's eve lang syne in bonnie Scotland whar first I saw the licht. I woke to a sound as o' siller bells,—it was the merry tinklin' o' clear waters, as they fell frae rock to rock in the mountain stream frae whence I come. But sune I heard another sound that was yet gladder an' sweeter—the voices o' a lassie an' a lad. There was in them a ring o' joyous melody ye dinna aften hear. The fountains o' the young creatures' hearts were just brimmin' oure wi' happiness.

"An' sae they mingled pleasantly the singin' o' the burnie as it gaed dancin' on its way, an' the lovin', tender words o' the blythesome twa that stood beside its banks.

"'It's no' for me to chuse, Lewie, ye ken;' an' pretty Ailsie blushed an' hung her head.

"'Why for no'?' replied Lewis wi' a merry laugh.

"'It's just because—I canna,' whispered ilsie.

"'Here's luck!' suddenly exclaimed the lad. Ailsie, see what the fairies themsel's hae chosen or you!' an' he loupit upo' a rock jutting out ae the water whar I'd been flung. The hell was open, for the creature within had ied; an' whether he catched a glimpse o' me, r just guessed what he suld find, I canna say, ut loupin' back he carried me with him.

"'Here'll be a ring fit for a queen! Ailsie, this no' a bonnie Pearl? I'll hae it set in romarty, an' my winsome wifie shall hae a vedding ring will match wi' auld grannie's, hat she aye vows brought her gude luck.'

"The wedding day came sune. The minister miled to see the ring o' Pearl for a marriage ing; but it wasna against the law, an' sae deckit Ailsie's gentie hand.

"Eh, but thae early marriage days, how uickly they gaed by! hours sae short I've ever counted sin'. At Rowan-bank the sun eemed ever shinin'. The husband an' the wife just lived the ane for the ither, an' beamin' een an' lovin' words filled the bit house wi' pleasantness.

"Sae cheery was our hame, I wondered Sabbath morns at kirk to hear to the gude minister aye tellin' the same tale o' trial an' trouble sure to come, an biddin' the folk look abune to Ane wha'd never fail to help them to bear whatever cross he sent. The warld I thocht sae bonnie an' sae bricht he ca'ed a 'waefu' warld!' Mickle did I wonder to hear sae aft the same weary lesson, as it seemed to me, for I culdna see the need o' it. I was but a bit senseless Pearlie then, or I micht hae minded me o' my ain birth-stream, at times sae doucely flowin', an' then sae tossed about an' buffeted upo' the rocks.

"Sair lesson is it to learn, but it's pleasant when learned, that there's gude in a' things ordered for us. I've heard tell sin' it's just thae very blows the puir shells get in tossin' about that gies to them their Pearls; for in the pools an' lakes that are aye still an' untroubled, the shells hae nane.

"But I culdna follow the minister's teachin' then, for wasna Ailsie's een as bricht as diamonds, an' her cheeks as red as ony rose—an' Lewis, too, as blythe an' bonnie as hersel'? An' when I lookit round the cheery cot, I

culdna spy a chink through which sorrow an' dule culd enter in!

"But oh, wae's me, when nane were lookin' for it the *trouble* came!—an ugly form it took!

"I min' it a' as if 'twas but yestreen!

"It was the gloamin', the husband's foot was heard upo' the road. The wife ran out to meet him as she ever did! God an' gude angels be her guard! was yon her Lewie? No' a man, but seemingly a demented thing, wi' glassy eyes, white cheeks, an' staggerin' gait; an' waur than a', wi' the loud, laugh—no' the ring o' the true joy-bell—the loud but hollow soundin' laugh that gaes like a stound through the hearts o' them that hear it, as if the evil spirit was forcin' the puir creatures to mock at themsel's. The senseless lad, 'twas sae he thocht to cover the shame he culdna but feel at meetin' his sweet wife's wonderin' een.

"Puir lassie! it was as if the sicht had turned her into stane. She didna ken which way to look, what word to say, an' a strange, uncanny feel that she'd no kent before crept into her bosom, turnin' her sick an' cauld,—an' this was *Fear*.

"There's no' a mair grewsome guest than yon to sit at a man's fireside, an' wi' the evil thing puir Ailsie frae that hour was but too weel acquent. As shame died out o' the husband's briest an' anger took its place, sae did fear take up its mair constant abode i' the cot that was ance sae blythesome an' bricht. It amaist seemed to grow into a bodily presence, aye whisperin' words o' dule. It walkit behind the puir wife the lee lang day, as she gaed about her household wark. An' when the gloamin' came—the hour she'd luvit sae weel as the hour o' the husband's hame-comin', eh, but the creature grew mair fierce. Wi' glowrin' een an' skinny hand it seemed aye pointin' down the road, while it tell't her o' the sullen looks o' the yesternicht, an' the angry word, an' the threatened blow, which, God be thanked, had never fallen yet!

"Sae Ailsie's cheek grew wan an' white, an' the sparkle died out o' her bonnie brown een, an' her siller voice was heard nae mair fillin' the house wi' melody as blythesome as the laverock's sang. Eh, but 'twas pitifu' to see, an' she sae young and sae bonnie!

"Sae silently had Ailsie workit noo for

mony a lang, lang day, that ane sunshiny morn I was fain to jump upo' her hand at the sound o' her voice. Unco saft an low she began, as if 'twas strange even to hersel' that she culd sing again, but ere the sang was ended her notes grew mair heartsome an' strang. An' this was Ailsie's sang:—

'The butterfly an' the bee's abroad,
Ane to wark an' ane to play;
But the birdie in her quiet nest,
She sitteth still all day.

'The fragrant gorse frae cups o' gowd,
Hath honey drops to gie;
An' the sunlit air's alive the day
Wi' a goodly companie!

'On fresh turned mools i' the farmer's field
Hath fallen a siller rain;
There's mony a busy creature there,
Speerin' for the precious grain!

'The lee lang day yer mate's away,
The fir-tree's boughs look dreary;
Still as a stane, sittin' yer lane,
Puir bird, ye maun be weary!

'My lovin' mate, he may be late,
For me his busy quest!
I weary but for his return,—eh, but he's joyfu' news to learn,—
There's wee birds i' the nest.

"An' Ailsie's little hands were busier than ever. I smiled to see the wee bit claes that grew frae between her fingers. Sae daintily

made, wi' stitches like pearls, the minister's leddy said, 'sure they were fit for a fairy's robes.' An' 'deed, to my thinking, such micht hae been brawer, but nane culd hae been bonnier than the saft snaw-white garments she was aye sewin' at, puir lass, though tears were the only pearls that broidered them. Whyles they rained down onawares—oh, but she'd quickly shake them aff—she wadna hae her baby's claethes tear-wetted, for wasna the wee stranger to be indeed as a gude fairy to chase awa frae its faither the evil spirit which had made o' him a changed man?

"Proud an' joyfu' was the young faither when he lookit into his ain wee lassie's face; an' to faither an' mither baith it seemed as if a bit o' the very sky itsel' had gane to make their first-born's innocent blue een.

"'An' what name will we gie our bairn, Ailsie, my woman?' said Lewis, wi' ane o' his auld lovin' looks.

"'Wha suld it be but *Margaret?*' said the glad mither, pointin' to her marriage-ring wi' a smile like a sunbeam, 'for will she no' be our *Pearl?*'

"Ye see Ailsie had been to the Sabbath

schule o' the minister's leddy, an' she aye tell't the lassies the meanin' o' each o' their Christian names.

"'Aiblins,' said she, 'thae pretty thochts micht be blessed to them. The very ca'ing o' their names wad be a reminder o' some Christian grace; for,' said the leddy, 'the lesson ance learned, wad Lætitia be sulky, or Amy be dour?'

"An' sae they ca'ed her Margaret, but mony a name had she forbye. I've heard tell o' princesses o' Spain wha counted names up to a score! but our Marget beat them a',—there was nae keeping count o' hers. Bonnie birdie—wee lammie—mither's joy—fairy queen—precious *Pearl*—they aye come aften back to yin. An' truly did it seem as if the wee Pearlie had been blest to knit the faither's an' mither's heart thegither again, even as at first they had been by the marriage-ring o' Pearl.

"A lovely bairn she was, wi' lustrous een o' heaven's tenderest blue, an' hair like threads o' gowd. Dearly as her mither lo'ed her, amaist it seemed her faither luvit her mair,—his Marget was his pride an' his delicht.

It was a pretty sicht to see the wee lassie stretchin' out her bit arms to the tall, strang man, an' he fauldin' her sae saftly to his breist.

"An' the melody o' joyfu' hearts ance mair went up to heaven frae Rowan-bank.

"But the serpent was scotched, an' no' killed. The sma' cloud gloomed again o'er Ailsie's head, aye darkenin' an' darkenin', an' the evil thing ca'ed Fear crept into the house again, and crouched down beside the ingle-nook.

"This time the mischief grew mair rapidly. The narrow path is hard to keep, but Satan aye keeps his ways braid an' open!—ance found, it's easy findin' again!

"It was a simmer's eve, but no' like the first I tauld ye of. There had been ill weather—torrents o' rain had fa'en, an' the sky looked threatenin', as if mair was on its way. But it wasna wanted, for the river was overfu', an' had burst its banks. The waters were out in mony places, the wind was risin', an' it lookit like a black nicht comin'.

"Ailsie stood at her gate lookin' out for him that suld come; and bricht-eyed Margaret, a

wee toddlin' lassie then o' twa years auld, held by her mither's goun, an' speered too alang the wet road wi' her sma' voice cryin' 'Faither.'

"But the wife's heart grew sick. Afar off, (eh, but the puir young bodie's ears were ower keen ever to catch his voice),—afar off she heard the loud laugh an' senseless maunderin' talk that tell't her he wasna himself the nicht! Some evil companions were wi' him—the shoutin' an' the noise came nearer, and wee Margaret crept closer to her mither. Sae Ailsie catched her up in her arms an' turned to enter the cottage.

"'Stay whar ye are, wife,' ca'ed out the drunken man, in a loud, angry voice. Mischief makin' men had been twittin' him wi' being ruled by his wife, an' he thocht to show them he was his ain maister and her's too.

"Ailsie obeyed, but her cheek grew white an' her knees trembled. 'Gie me the bairn,' he ca'ed out again in a hasty tone, as he came nearer. 'I've promised to take her to Millside. Her grannie's got a braw new frock for her. Marget will come wi' faither to get her bonnie frock?' An' he held out his

arms for her to gae to him; but, dearly as she lo'ed him, there was a something in his look an' voice that frighted the wee lassie. She turned awa' frae him an' nestled closer to her mither.

"'No' the nicht, Lewie? ye'd surely no' be wantin' to take Marget to Millside on sickin nicht as this?'

"'Ye daurna,' hissed out some wicked voice amongst the crowd.

"'Wha says I daurna?' shouted the misguided man. 'Lads, ye'll see!' He grippit the bairn an' set aff rinnin'. But even i' his drunken passion he was tender wi' his wee lammie, an' strokit her face an' kissed her; she greetin' an' sobbin' the while.

"He hadna gane mony staps when he lookit ower his shouther, an' there was the mither followin'.

"'Bide at hame,' cried he, wi' an oath. What wi' the drink an' the jeerin' o' the evil men, he was just wud.

"Amaist stupified wi' terror an' amazement, the puir mither ga'ed back to the house. She flung hersel' upo' her knees. But she culdna rightly pray—for an' hour or mair she seemed

no' that conscious—when suddenly a confused noise was heard without—men's feet hurryin' by, an' cries o' 'The bridge, the bridge! Millside bridge is carried awa'!'

"She never kent how she got to the spot; but on the banks o' the very stream where the Pearl o' her marriage ring was gie'd to her, Ailsie Grahame stood that nicht.

"Black clouds were scurrying overhead; the wind was hurtlin' by wi' broken twigs an' leaves, which it had wrenched frae aff the trees; an' the yellow waters were tumblin' past wi' hoarse murmurin', as the cruel wind was lashin' them into foam. But a' this Ailsie didna see or hear; for, husht!—a knot o' grave men were standin' thegither: as Ailsie came up they maistly turned awa' their heids, and mony grat. I' the midst o' them was Lewie. The devil was gane out o' him noo,—but he lookit like a drowned man. His hair an' his claes were streaming wi' wet. He was kneelin' on ae knee, and on the ither was laid a sma' white thing,—it looked like a lily-wreath, or a wreath of snow; it stirred not at the mither's bitter cry,—it never wad stir mair,—for the soul o' their wee Margaret,

their ain bonnie Pearl, had gane to be wi' the angels in heaven!

"A twelvemonth had come and gane. Lewie an' Ailsie, in deep black, a settled sorrow i' the face o' each, sat wi' clasped hands by a sma' mound o' turf starred ower wi' gowans. Forbye a 'Pearl,' Margaret, ye ken, stands for a 'gowan;' an' sae it seemed that the innocent flowers came thickest where sweet wee Margaret slept. It maun hae been o' their ain choosin', for nought had Ailsie planted or sown. Naething had she to gie her darlin's grave, but tears, aye tears!

"They say that greetin' saftens grief, an' whyles it may; but mony a woman kens the meanin' o' these words, *an' agony o' tears.*

"Ailsie wasna greetin' noo, the tears were just brimmin' ower; but they were maistly ever sae—aye gatherin', puir lassie, in her een. 'Twas only in her dreams that Ailsie saw aught clearly, as in ither days; for, when awake, the rain clouds o' sorrow aye happit her about. But the Lord was very pitifu', an' every nicht the mither saw her bairn. Sae thro' the lang, lang day she ga'ed about

er wark, aye wearyin' for her Margaret's ngel-face, which, when nicht came an' the 'arld was hushed to rest, she then was sure ı her glad dreams to see!

"I kent by Ailsie's tremblin' hand she'd ɔmething on her mind to say. Ye may be ıre, she'd but to speak for Lewis to agree—he 'as a changed man. The troubled waters o' on fearfu' nicht had been blessed to him; an' ıilsie aye thocht it was the angel that went own into them to fetch away the soul o' her ttle Margaret that had gied them the power ɔ heal her husband o' his sair disease!

"But Ailsie lingered still in what she was aun to say. She shivered as she thocht o' he unhealed spot in her ain moe's heart, hat she maun noo lay her saft finger upon, n' creepin' closer to him, wi' a tender voice, alf whisperin', she began:—

"'My Lewie, ye ken the Englishman wha's ıidin' i' the toun, seeking for Pearls,'—puir ıewie winced; 'I met him some days back; e was sae taken wi' this bonnie gem.' Lewis tarted.

"'My ain puir darlin'!' Ailsie cried, an' lung her arms about her husband's neck. She

couldna gae on wi' the quiet words in which she'd thocht to break her purpose tenderly to him, an' sae wi' sobs an' broken words she asked his leave to part wi' the Pearl out o' her ring.

"'Too aft,' she said, 'it minded her o' the waters frae whence it came; an', Lewie, ye ken, it's no' the gem, but the gowden ring itsel' that's the marriage token. An' wi' the siller it will bring will we no' hae, my Lewie, a bonnie wee white gravestane wi' 'Margaret' upon it, putten up where our ain precious Pearlie lies, an' where her faither an' her mither will ane day be laid down beside her?'"

The company now became suddenly conscious of a delicious perfume, which, ever increasing in volume, soon filled the apartment. It was as if the room they were in, all redly lighted with a Christmas fire, had in the instant been changed into a bower, fragrant and glowing with the rich roses of June. Wonderingly, all gazed around; some looked curiously at the carpet and curtains, as if in this night of wonders the breath of life might have been given to them. But no! the en-

hanter's word had passed them by, and they ere mute and motionless.

The wise little Paper-tickets confined their oks of inquiry to the Gifts, whether on tables r on Tree. At last the excited fluttering of ne of their number attracted all eyes to the pot whence, at the same moment, issued a low oft voice, languid, as if from very excess of weetness. In the hush of the room, however, was distinctly heard.

All looked with interest on the exceedingly retty individual who now addressed them. he was evidently of foreign extraction. Her dorous breath, as it now more familiarly oated around them, seemed redolent of richer erfume than the fresh scent of roses from an nglish garden. Her appearance, too, at once roclaimed her to be of Eastern origin.

They beheld a Vial—dark in colour, so overed over with an arabesque pattern in gold, hat the Liquid within, though of the most rilliant amber hue, was only partially visible. sort of turban, of thick material and of a eep red, covered the head entirely; and round the neck, attaching this child of a tropi-al clime to the dark branches of a Fir-tree of

the North, was one of those exquisite devices, which, however skilfully European hands may imitate, are never originated but in the glowing regions of the sun.

This Indian necklace was composed of two narrow ribbons, one of silver edged with white, the other of gold, with an outer line of the rich red of Oriental dye. The two were plaited together in an intricate sort of honey-comb pattern, forming a very peculiar chain of great beauty.

The voice issued from the bright amber-coloured Liquid within the Vial; it was tremulously sweet, as the softest of summer winds passing over the lips of the queen of flowers, for it was the voice of *Attar of Rose*, and thus it was she spake:—

X.

THE STORY OF A VIAL OF ATTAR OF ROSE.

How strange the contrasts of the evening! ow varied the company of Gifts gathered to ıinister to human beings' ingeniously devised eeds of luxury!

"Men's eyes crave brightness and beauty. 'rom his mountain rivulet in the new world he Diamond is summoned; and from their cean-beds are snatched the Coral and the 'earl. Worms are despoiled of their silken hrouds; which again are forced to borrow heir rainbow-coloured hues from insect, tree, nd flower.

"Their children's mouths must be filled with ainties. The Chocolate's brown seeds from he far West, and crystallized fruits from very clime are here!

"Their noses, too, must be gratified; and n the sunny East the queen of the garden lies, that her dying breath may be caught, nd the imprisoned fragrance brought to per-

fume the chilly chambers of a stranger-land.

"But see, now, from fair little Margaret's home in the far North we must travel quickly to the place of my birth. Oh, that I could picture for you the glorious river of my native land! It bears on its broad breast tall vessels freighted with rich merchandise. On the banks of this mighty stream, which measures 1500 miles in length, there are upwards of twenty proud cities, besides myriads of villages, temples, and bungalows, all looking with reverence into its yellow flood; for this, my river, is called by the natives of the land 'Holy,' and to die in its embrace will secure, they believe, an eternity of bliss.

"Come with me, then, up this venerated stream; but we may not linger where latticed verandas or palm-groves woo us to their cool shade. Not even at Benares the 'splendid' may we stay, but pass on to where the Ganges pitying laves the ruins of departed grandeur. The marbles of her magnificent palaces are crumbling into dust, but Ghazipoor wears her crown of Roses still!

"Not like your fields, dear English friends,

r with wild-flowers the colours of your flag red, white, and blue; the fields of Ghazipoor, hundreds of acres round, are of one only, l that the glowing crimson of the Damask se.

"My mother was a Syrian Rose—the Rose Damascus. That wondrous city, Damascus beautiful and proud nearly four thousand ars ago, alone, of all the cities of the East, has retained aught of her ancient glory. asted Babylon, buried Nineveh, ruined lmyra, fallen Jerusalem,—Damascus has tlived you all!

"'Rosa Damascæna,' transplanted to the nges' banks, there yields a fragrant oil ecious as liquid gold. Do you smile? At ur Great Exhibition but a few years back, en gave two golden pieces and a half for an nce of Attar of Rose.

"But you will not wonder, when you hear w many thousands of blooming flowers ust die to afford but one of these most costly ops.

"It was morning when I first woke to the ad consciousness of life. My birth-place is the nd of the Hindoo and the Mohammedan. The

temples of the one, the domed mosques and tapering minarets of the other, showed dazzlingly white against the rosy sky not yet overlaid with gold, for the pathway of the kingly sun.

"I was a Rose. How beautiful the bright world seemed to me! Far as the eye could reach, the garden where I grew was radiant with the presence of my lovely sisters. I knew that I too was beautiful as they were, and eagerly I looked for the coming sun, that when the full blaze of his splendour should be shed upon me, the crimson of my velvet cheek might show more radiant still. "Ah! my sisters, how few of us know what is for our real happiness! Ere long the morning breeze brought to my ear a different sound to the bulbul's song, which had been my first greeting as I awoke.

"It was the sound of many voices—human beings speaking in the soft Hindustani language. As I had longed for the rising of the sun, so now I longed for these creatures of a different race to draw near and look upon me. Ah! when did vanity lead to aught but sorrow?

"They came, dark-skinned men, women,

d children, all in garments of white. The
aidens had lustrous eyes and moved with
quisite grace, but all dragged along with
em large bags. With wonder and dismay
beheld that wherever they went my beauti-
l sisters vanished. Ah me! the notice which
had so coveted was that of the spoiler!

"Long ere the sun shone forth in his noon-
le splendour my bright but short life as a
ose was over. But ought I to murmur,
nen I recollect that it is by such early death
r fragrance is preserved? If left upon the
ee, how soon should I have withered beneath
e fierce heat of those golden rays I had so
inly wished should look upon me! and dying
us I should have left no remembrance be-
nd.

"But I must tell you how from a crimson
ose I became the amber-coloured Liquid that
ou see,—if indeed I can be seen through the
lden bars of my prison.

"In March and April the gardens of Ghazi-
oor are stripped of their fragrant and beauti-
l blossoms. Counted by millions, they are
rried away and put into large vessels; forty
ounds of Roses with about double their

weight of water. By means of a furnace and a still, the scent of our leaves is given to the water, which becomes Rose-water. This is of itself much valued everywhere for perfumery, confectionary, and medicinal purposes. So fragrant is it and so cool, that for heated brows or inflamed eyes there can be no bath so delicious; but in the luxurious East, rich men pour it over their hands and beards at the conclusion of every repast.

"But ere the still more precious Attar is obtained, the Rose-scented water must pass through another process.

"Poured into large metal basins, which are covered with wetted muslin and sunk two feet deep into the ground, the Rose-water is left in quiet for a night. By early morning a little film will have gathered on its surface. This is softly and delicately removed by means of a feather, and these fragrant drops are added one by one till the vials prepared to receive them are filled. Then adorned as you see, and hermetically sealed (in other words, closed with a cemented stopper), we are sent as costly gifts to all parts of the world. When destined for the use of the native princes, the

als themselves are often enclosed in small ooden cases ornamented with bands of various lours.

"Such careful guardianship betokens preciousss. Two hundred thousand Roses will eld but one rupee's weight of Attar, and on e spot where it is made that small quantity, pure and unadulterated, sells for a hundred pees, or ten of your golden sovereigns.

"But envy me not, dear friends, this costliss. Alas! the joyless destiny of the enslaved omen of the East most strangely seems to ng about even the very flowers to which, hen loveliest, they are likened!—for am I t a prisoner? My prison of crystal and ld is a gorgeous one, but oh, not less is it a ison!

"Hedgerows of merry England! are not our native wild roses far happier than I n be?

"And in the gardens of both rich and poor, erished and loved by all, the sweet Cabbage ose dwells joyously in the free air, the tempered sunshine and refreshing dew making her ad. Unvexed by her homely name, she cks not of her proud descent from the

hundred-leaved Rose of the old Caucasian race, from which, in the East, the precious Attar is also distilled, or whose fragrant petals are preserved in honey, to afford that exquisite conserve that Orientals prize as a sweetmeat, and the people of the West value as a medicine.

"Farewell!—one only joy has the poor prisoner from sunny climes. When the snow-flakes of these chilly realms have enshrouded her sweet sisters of the garden and the field, to her it is given to remind you of them by the perfume preserved in herself by the skill of men."

"Indeed and indeed I can't," whispered a pretty *Black Enamel Watch*, her heart beating quickly, and her little hands trembling with agitation as she held them before her face.

An impressive touch from her Paper-ticket had reminded her of what she had already perceived almost with terror,—that the sceptre pointed towards her.

"Oh, please don't ask me, for I really could not tell you how I was made. Only think how very difficult it would be to explain, and

just so few words too, all that wonderful
. complicated machinery which is inside of
;—indeed I could not do it."

The ordeal which had seemed so terrible at
t, did not appear to many quite so formid-
e now. They found themselves allowed to
as much or as little as they liked of their
ividual histories, their hearers (generally
aking) indulgently accepting the apologies
hose who felt unable adequately to explain
icult matters, and even their candid acknow-
gments of occasional lack of knowledge.
e only thing that never failed to make a
culous impression was the assumption of
versal knowledge, or indeed assumption of
kind.

There were some, therefore, who would
lingly have taken the place of the Watch,
so long as the sceptre did not swerve, no
else could rise.

At last the Queen herself addressed the
tty little Genevese: "Do not disappoint
I beg; so many will be interested in what-
er you may think fit to tell us. Of course
should not be so unreasonable as to expect
u to teach us how a Watch is made, but

any notices of interest about Time-pieces in general that may occur to you we should all be grateful to receive."

There was no resisting this gentle appeal; so, striving to control her agitation, the little Watch thus began :—

XI.

THE STORY OF AN ENAMEL WATCH.

:ow very much I wish the stately clock ld have been called upon rather than my- ! I am so wholly unfit for the interesting ɛ of giving an account of Time-pieces. :koned, as they are, amongst the greatest :mphs of human skill, their very name :laims their immeasurable value to men.

'An English queen might well interest her- in the story of a Watch, as from England e originated so many successive improve- ıts in the making of Clocks and Watches. self a Genevese, I gladly bear testimony to I have heard of the excellence of English tches in the present day. Paris and ıeva are the rivals of London, but they do surpass her.

: In one particular branch of the manufac- :, which to England, as mistress of the seas, : especial importance, no other nation, I be- e, can compete with her,—I mean Chrono-

meters—time-measurers, by whose unswerving accuracy in keeping count of time, the mariner determines his longitude at sea.

"No way-marks are there on the shifting waves, but 'heaven is above all yet,' and immutable guides are there, to all who keep faithful count below.

"The trusty 'Sea Watch' keeps the time of Greenwich, where it was set. Compared with the glorious dial-plate above, the fixed stars, and the moving moon, the difference of time between them shows the ship-master his *longitude*, or distance east or west of Greenwich. His *latitude*, or distance north or south of the equator, those stars will tell him also. And so across the trackless deep, with watchful eyes but fearless hand, the helmsman steers his good ship's course. 'Steady she goes,' even as through life's oft-perplexing paths true hearts press bravely on, the precepts and the promises of heaven their starlike and unfailing guides.

"For a Time-keeper, by which the longitude could be so discovered, in your English Queen Anne's reign a noble reward of £20,000 was offered. It was gained by one of her

vn subjects, Harrison, whose 'Marine Watch' as proved to be trustworthy during a voy-ge to Barbadoes. To such perfection are they ow brought, that navigators exposed to the eatest variety of climates, have found their hronometers not vary two seconds in the hole year!

"Could he have foreseen it, how envious of our success would have been that mighty panish monarch, who, wearied with the very cess of his greatness, turned from his mptuous palaces to seek for rest in the cell a monastery, secluded in a quiet valley. here, flinging down the reins of his immense mpire, he occupied himself with the curious echanism by which things of metal are ade to act as if gifted with life.

"But the royal workman found it impos-ble to make two Watches agree in keeping e same time. From them the bigot Charles rdily learned the lesson which rivers of blood aining the dungeon floors of the Inquisition ight have taught him long before,—the yet eater impossibility (by human means) of nforcing on men such uniformity of religious octrine as he had sought to enforce.

"To the workmen of these times, who with such marvellous accuracy fashion the more delicate parts of instruments, on whose truthfulness so many human lives depend, how great the debt their fellow-creatures owe! How keen must be their sight (too overtaxed, alas, ever to last a life-time!)—how delicate their touch—how quick must they be to discern—how patient to persevere! A wandering glance, or the hasty movement of a ruffled temper, would destroy their work!

"Look back upon the past.

"The Sun-dial of the Chaldæans; the Clepsydra or Water-clock of the Egyptians, with which even the polished Greek and luxurious Roman were forced to content themselves; or the darling of the poet, the Hour-glass, where, instead of the Clepsydra's drops of water, grains of sand fall ceaselessly to mark the swift footsteps of departing Time;—how have they all been surpassed by the simple-looking Clock that swings its trusty pendulum behind the English cottage-door!

"I have heard it said by learned men that it is impossible to speak with certainty as to the individual who first invented Clocks or

regulated machines to tell the hour. It was, like many a grand invention, born of the united efforts of many observing men.

"Far away, in the mists of the fifth century, men find in the name of Boethius, friend of Theodoric, King of the Goths, the first claimant of the honour of having made such a Time-keeper; but its nature and its form are not clearly defined. Eight centuries later history tells them of an actual striking Clock, the work of an English artist, and mounted in the famed Clock-house near Westminster Hall. Again two centuries, and it is recorded that the dean of St. Stephen's drew sixpence a day from the king's exchequer for keeping this Clock in order.

"Huygens of Holland perfected, as applied to Clocks, the idea of the pendulum, first suggested by the renowned Galileo.

"But Hooker of England disputes with the Dutchman the distinction of having invented the 'spiral spring,' originating, as it did, the Pocket Time-piece or Watch. Only a year intervenes between the recorded presentation of Huygens' handiwork to the States of Holland and the date '1568' engraved on the

dial-plate of Hooker's Watch, which in the following century was presented to Charles II.

"In the wondrous 'Green Vaults' of the palace at Dresden, (those treasure-chambers, unmatched but by the Genii-caves of Eastern tales,) are preserved two Watches of the sixteenth century, called, as they then were, 'Nuremberg Eggs,' from the town where they were made and the shape given to them.

"Since the happy invention of the Time-piece, every century, and latterly almost every year, has contributed some improvement in an article, the perfecting of which is of such general benefit. It would seem as if, in our manufacture, the skill of men, as it were, luxuriated.

"How endless have been the caprices of ingenuity attached to the mechanism of huge Cathedral Clocks! At Lyons and at Strasbourg, besides the indication of minutes, hours, days of the week and month, the phases of the sun and moon, and other celestial phenomena, cunning wheels and life-like springs put into motion strange figures and quaint devices of many kinds. To others, as at Bruges, a 'carillon' or chime of bells is

tached, as is also often done to small House-
ocks, making the glad hours seem to walk
e earth with music.

"But on the Watch, the youngest and best
loved of the family, incalculable treasures
e lavished. Jewelled within and without,
e costly toys are studded and starred with
amonds, rubies, and pearls. In my own
viss Canton de Vaud, Geneva alone yearly
nploys on Watches 75,000 ounces of gold,
0,000 of silver, and precious stones in value
30,000. A hundred thousand Watches are
nually made in Geneva for exportation, em-
oying upwards of 2000 men.

"Men have delighted in placing us, their
ave monitors, in every imaginable orna-
ental form and device. Tiny Watches have
een set in bracelets, lockets, and rings. In
ne 'World's Fair,' which but a few years
ack was held in the Crystal Palace of Eng-
nd, my people from Geneva exhibited a gold
enholder, having for its top a fairy-like Time-
iece, which not only told the hours, minutes,
nd seconds, but also the days of the month.

"On my own outward covering I have no
ime to linger. Enamel is but a variety of

glass,—that beautiful, transparent substance, given by accident to men so many centuries ago, when, on the shores of the little Galilean stream that rises in Mount Carmel, the ship-wrecked sailors' fire melted the soda with the sand. But that which had begun by accident was soon converted into an art. Men fashioned out of glass divers articles of use and ornament. They forced from precious stones the secret of their radiant hues, and with the like metallic dyes they coloured their new material. In lustre matchless still, the ruby, the emerald, the sapphire, and the topaz sparkled with indignation to behold the counterfeit gems of glowing crimson, vivid green, deep blue, and golden yellow.

"The Venetians, who were taught the art of making glass by the Crusaders, who brought the secret from the Holy Land, combined with it the kindred manufacture of Enamels, the basis of the composition of each and their colouring matters being the same; and though through the lapse of ages many a precious secret has been lost, yet still the nations are supplied from Venice with the best Enamels.

"Enamels are transparent, semi-transparent,

and opaque. Gold and copper alone can be coated with Enamel; if laid on silver it is blistered and the smooth surface destroyed with holes.

"The metal, covered with the Enamel-paste, is passed through a furnace. If painted upon, the colours used are themselves Enamels, ground between agates to the finest powder, and mixed with oil-of-lavender. The painting finished, it must be fixed by being again subjected to the heat of a furnace.

"And now, dear friends, I would pray your pardon for having done such scant justice to the mighty theme imposed on me. Unequal, indeed, was I to so vast and magnificent a subject as Time-keepers—vast in the individual things themselves—still more vast in their infinite significance.

"From the great Clock that on the tall Church-tower, with iron voice and iron hands, bids men take note of Time passing into Eternity, down to my own diminutive self, with tiny hands and small voice, faintly heard repeating the same tale,—of which in your English tongue my very name is significant, we say to all,—'*Watch!*'"

XII.

THE STORY OF A BOOK-MARKER.

"AH! I see you smile, you great and superb ones! You say to yourselves, 'That little Book-marker, what can she have to say for herself? She is not even one of the beautiful and costly of her kind. She is not adorned with golden fringes, or with elaborately worked devices. A plain, narrow, *mauve*-coloured Ribbon, knotted with three ends, to one hanging a red and black seed, to another a larger grey one, and to the third a round black berry,—What can she have to say?'

"Not much can she say of herself; but then, you see, she is a Book-marker, and, dear friends, that pleasure makes up to her for being neither grand nor beautiful.

"Ah! when I see human beings who can absolutely choose for themselves what *books* they may *mark*—countless volumes of countless libraries; when I see them wearying of the day before it is half spent, because some

little plan has missed, or because it is too hot, or too cold, or too something or other; I wonder, and I say to myself,—but my voice is so low that they cannot hear,—If they were but Book-markers, then would no day be too long for them.

"Do you not think it strange, my friends, that those clever human beings, with all their inventions for seeing things far, very far off, do not sometimes try a little to *hear* the voices of things quite close to them? The poets have of themselves that gift; and oh! what unspeakable joy it is to them! It is not only to the grand works of nature that the poets listen, though they must ever love them best. Clouds with their silver wings—sea-waves with their pearled feet—lofty trees and lovely flowers—these all speak so plainly that they are few who do not catch, at times, their voices of melody. But even to such little things as myself do poets listen—to such as me they bend down tenderly the head; and we speak to them of many things, the half of which, perhaps, might weary you; but poets' thoughts are strong-winged as eagles,—they fly far, but do not weary.

"See now my little Ribbon—to the poet, or to those amongst you who resemble him, my very name is eloquent. It brings to mind the tournament of olden days, when the flower of chivalry pressed forward 'to do or die,' that they might win—a knot of Ribbon from their Ladye's hand. Well might our name be derived, as men say, from the Latin of 'Red;'—not from the old chronicler's reason, 'because the most beautiful Ribbons were the colour of fire,' but because the Ribbons that the knights wore, whatever their original colour, white, blue, or green, were but too often in the end all *reddened* in their blood.

"And still, in our days, on land and on sea, how many are the gallant spirits which spring forth to risk an encounter with death!—for if spared, they will deem lost limbs and shattered health richly repaid by the 'Ribbon,' which, pinned upon their breasts, would claim honour and respect from all. Your country lad, when the 'Ribbons' of the recruit are fluttering from his cap, how many brilliant dreams has he of valiant deeds his sturdy arm will do!

"As love-tokens, now the hands are reversed that give and receive the 'Ribbon.'

e village girl accepts it from her lover, as in en times the lady of high degree was wont confer it on hers.

"'Wedding favours'—what are they but bons of white, plain, or daintily edged with er?

"Sumptuary laws are passed away, and men l women now dress as they will; the form l materials of their garments are subject to law. Would that they were to two at st,—good taste and common sense! If money credit can be found, the tradesman's wife y robe herself in velvet, ermine, and cloth gold. But one thing she may not wear, may the noblest lady of the land, save ,—a blue Ribbon passing from shoulder to ist. For is it not the insignia of the arter?" that time-honoured Order of Knight-od, the 'Ribbon' and 'Star,' which the most tinguished men of your own and other ntries are proud to display, but which no man wears save England's Queen, as Sove-gn of the Order, adding thereto yet greater ce than she receives," said the little mauve-oured Ribbon with a pretty obeisance to her jesty, and then continued,—

"These are but outlines of what the mention of my name suggests. Filled in and richly coloured by a poet's hand, would they not become a gallery of pictures?

"To speak now of myself and of my birthplace, English friends, do you guess it is Coventry? Not so. Although your good old town of Coventry is famous for its Ribbon manufactories, I am French, from Lyons, the greatest of the manufacturing and commercial cities of France. What then,—do you think of Lyons only as of a large and busy town? So too did I, till I became a *Book-marker.* But now, what vivid scenes are conjured up before me at the sound of its name!

"In winged thought I fly back eighteen centuries, and where the clear and rapid waters of the Rhone unite with the dark and sluggish Saone, I see an infant town. It grows beneath the Romans' fostering care,—temples and palaces arise. In your British Museum a tiny silver coin yet shows the proud cognizance which the lion-city assumed. But not of lion-blood were the ill-fated Emperors Claudius and Caracalla that Lyons claim as born in her. Successive masters

ıake an ever-shifting scene. The Crescent ıere once over-topped the Cross. But shame ı it for Lyons to confess how mild was the oke of the infidel Moor, compared with the ɜign of terror which the sons of her soil pro-laimed at the close of the last century. 'wenty thousand of her affrighted children .ed for safety to the mountains of Switzerland, bandoning their dwellings to the fatal silver-ıammer of the deformed Couthon, too happy hemselves to escape from the hideous spite of Collot d' Herbois, the actor once hissed in un-ıappy Lyons. Then were the fairest of her ɔuildings doomed to destruction, the despoiled ɔwners being forced to pay the destroyers. £600,000 was thus spent on the demoli-ɜion of property, the value of which was £12,000,000. The most virtuous of her inhabitants were doomed to death—a genera-tion was swept away.

"The waters of the Rhone were no longer clear. In some places they were so red with blood that women, shuddering, turned from where they had been wont to wash their linen, to seek some other spot, where an unpolluted stream might cleanse, and not defile, their gar-

ments and their hands. The very mists that at evening went up from the earth, were crimsoned by the outpoured blood of the victims Ah! how mighty must have been their cry, as those red mists rolled darkly to the footstool of an avenging God! Too terrible but for a glance are such scenes!

"The Ribbon of Lyons gladly turns to the different pictures of to-day, when the little worms that are fed from the mulberry trees of the surrounding country, in their turn give food to about 80,000 persons. The silk manufactures of Lyons produce yearly 135,000,000 francs, while in France the annual value of her Ribbons alone is reckoned at upwards of £1,000,000.

"Much more might the Ribbon Bookmarker tell of Lyons, and her busy looms. A child of the loom herself, she knows how infinite in interest would be some notice of its various fabrics, velvet, satin, silk, and gauze, but she must hasten on.

"Yet, from my colour I would fain suggest two pretty subjects for thought.

"For how many years did the pretty wildflower Mallow bloom unnoticed by the road-

side! but cheerily, as if no flower had ever had daintier home. The Lily, Rose, and Violet, and even the pale Primrose, each and all had due homage paid to them—but who cared for the 'Common Mallow?" When on a sudden she becomes celebrated, fair women and lordly men are proud to wear her colours, and costliest fabrics of the loom are dyed to imitate the hue of the simple roadside flower, and are called by her humble name.

"Yet once again listen, I pray. Of a substance called 'Aniline,' no use was found for many years; but the beauty of the violet hue, which betokened its presence, allured the patient chemist to persevere in his attempt to render permanent its fleeting charm. He succeeds, the lovely *Mauve*, or *Mallow*-coloured dye, is found, and the substance, an ounce or two of which was rarely seen a few years back, is now produced in thousands of gallons.

"My little seeds, too, each of them may claim some interest. The one which is clothed in scarlet, with a cape, as it were, of velvety-black, is a native of both the East and West Indies—in the West it is called Wild Licorice, and the roots and leaves are used as such.

But its beautiful seeds are everywhere prized. Roman Catholics, in the countries where they are found, use them as beads of prayer, or rosaries; hence they are named 'Abrus *precatorius.*' The superstitious negroes, perhaps from seeing them reverently handled by white men, call them 'Jumbe beads.'

"My large grey seed has a wider sphere of usefulness. Such seeds are natives of the East and West Indies, of South America, Africa, and Arabia. In the East they are used as a valuable medicine; and to them also is a superstitious reverence paid. Strung in necklaces, the Egyptian mothers hang them round their children's necks as a charm against sorcery, and all manner of evil influences; while to the boys they serve as marbles for their games.

"Their specific name is 'Guilandina *bonducella,*' derived from *bonduc,* the Arab word for necklace. *Nicker* is their West Indian name. By the Irish and Scotch, on whose shores they are often cast, they are called 'Molucca Beans.'

"It would almost seem as if these small seeds, so safely carried in the rough arms of

the mighty ocean for so many hundreds of miles, must indeed bear a charmed life.

"A native also of the West India Islands, and of South America, my other little friend, who has all the appearance of a bead of polished jet, Sapindus Saponaria, you know better, perhaps, as the—Soapberry."

The shiny-faced little black fellow here eagerly sprang forward, with a beseeching look, which it would have been impossible to resist.

"Eh, Missy Ribbon, you no let li'le black Berry speak for hisself?"

Then turning with a profound bow to her Majesty, he continued—

XIII.

THE STORY OF THE SOAPBERRY.

"I REALLY too glad to hab de opportunity of redressing de Queen, to ressure her dat she hab no where chil'en more affectionated den her black chil'en, 'specially in de island whar I hab de honour to belong.

"Long time ago, when ole England seem fighting 'gainst de whole world (Bonyparty make hisself master of great slice of it, and she de only real fighter 'gainst him), 'li'le England' (Barbadoes oder name) send word home—'*King George, neber fear while brave Badian 'tan 'tiff.*' Same ting now true, 'Badian born hab only one fault,—he really too brave.' An' I ressure de English people dat dey may keep for de ole country all de big guns and de fortifyrications,—de enemy neber put foot in one cane-piece of de island—no, neber! gib you my word. De bay (you know de bay, eh?)—Carlisle Bay, well de waters dere would be red fust wid de blood

of all de black gen'lemen an' ladies, an' de white folk of de island. When deir blood poured out, black chil'en's, white chil'en's, all de same colour! only outside skin differ,—dat make no 'count,—hear!"

Having delivered himself of this exuberant burst of loyalty and patriotism, which would surprise no one acquainted with the black population whose sentiments he undertook to represent, the little Soapberry continued, in a somewhat calmer tone—

"May be you tink I too grow on li'le plant like Missy Jumbe an' Missy Nicker? Not at all. I growed on a tree twenty feet high or more, wid a thick brown coat on dat jest fit me easy. De young lady who pick me up, she cut dat open an' drowed it away. She foolish chile to do dat ar—dat ere brown coat it make capital Soap. De washerwomen in some of de islands wash de white folks' linen wid de li'le black Soapberry's cast-off coats—ha, ha! Dat seem funny, eh? I tell you for true! gib you my word!

"My story but a li'le one. De tall tree I tell you of, he grow in bery fine garden close by de sea,—bery fine house too, wid de 'jalou-

sie verandahs, an' de colonnades, an' de cool hall, wid de squares of de black an' de white marble underfoot. Bery fine place whar li'le Soapberry was born.

"De Fader-tree quite content to stay dere all his life; but I what you call ambitious, and want dreadful bad to see de world, an' I fret an' fret on dat great tree, an' oh I wish eber so to be a Humming-bird, what hab shinin' wings to fly about. I pull an' I tug, but de li'le green stalk hold me fast—I not able to get away. Fader say, 'Doantie fret, li'le one; get away some day from de ole fader, an' neber, neber come back again.' Den I quiet for a li'le while.

"One ting 'prise me bery much. I see de trees an' de flowers on all sides lib quite content wid de one dress nature purvided for dem, dey neber changing 'bout de shape an' de colour of deir clo'es. De sweet Arabian Jasmine (she look like lubly white rose wid de parfume of de Jasmine),—oh de rale beauty dat flower! Well she allus got on de same white frock, soft as satin. De Quassia-flower she dress in bright red like Missy Coral ober dere—even in de same family dey neber

change dresses. Two lubly cousins, dey call 'em both Frangipane, grow close togeder; I see dem come out ebery day sweet an' fresh—de one wear her pink frock, de oder a white frock wid a kinder sash o' yellow. All my brudders an' sisters wear same brown coat fader gib to each of us. Better so, my 'pinion is, den de way human critturs do—seem to me dey always changin' clo'es.

"One day I see my Missy (I tell you by-an'-by why I call her *my* Missy) all in de white muslin, look plenty cool,—off she go in de carriage. 'Noder day, sun quite as hot—I scarcely tink same person—out she come in dark, heavy dress, trailing on de ground, forced to hold it wid one hand,—up she jump on de back of a horse (oh my! de pretty brown horse dat was!)—off she go—quite oder trim.

"But de ladies jest notin' 'pared wid de gen'lemen. I tell you for true. I see de bery same man in four dresses, all in de same day! Morning-time come to de hall all in white, easy-like dress, say 'Office-dress.' Go away, come again tree, four hours arter. Oh my! neber know him for same gen'leman!

Brighter dan de Humming-bird! all one blaze scarlet an' gold, an' de long beauty white fedder streaming from de hat, grand! de sword an' de spurs clatter an' jingle, make fine sound—he mount his horse an' gallop away. Time come for de 'evening ride' back again. Hi! de gold an' de fedder gone! only li'le red jacket now an' li'le blue cap. Wait a bit! Night come, de servants runnin' about to get de dinner, same man come again. My word! he look like de minister now, all in de black clo'es! Bery 'trange, eh?

"De evening pleasant time. De grooms bring round de horses, den de carriage come, an' de coachman wid smilin' black face, all one as me. De ladies an' de gen'lemen come out of de hall an' dey ride, an' dey drive away dro' de gates, far away. I hear dem talkin' an' larfin', an' I tink mighty pleasant to go 'bout like dat, eh? So dull in big tree for poor li'le black fellow in brown coat 'tuck up dere, an' can't get avay. I gib li'le tug to green string, see if right time come—no, not yet, so try an' pick up meantime all I hear say.

"Allus hear de white folk wid one word in

deir mouts,—*Home*. Quite curus to know what kinder place it was. De young lady say, in de li'le soft voice like de bird's, 'I 'fraid no time to answer letters from *home* dis Mail.' De tall grenadare officer wid de strong voice like de trumpet, say, 'Hope you hab good news from *home*.' Den some face I get to know bery well go 'way, neber come back again—hear some one say, 'So-an'-so lucky fellow, he got "leave," gone *home*.'

"At last I hear de family hisself goin' *home*. Soon arter dat, news come one evening 'stead of drivin' (horses sick, I s'pose), my Missy all alone saunterin' in de garden. Dey not go out bery much while de hot sun shine ('fraid to get brown like my coat, I s'pose—ha, ha!), 'cept when de big ships comin'; den dey all run like mad down to de sea-shore.

"Dat evening Missy quite near Fader-tree. I say to myself, Now for it, li'le fellow; now's your time. I 'member what my fader say, 'Time come, my boy; you ripe, you get away.' I gib great tug;—oh, jolly, down I come! I make a noise clattering dro' de branches; Missy look up, she see me fallin'; she pick me up. When my brown coat drawn

away, she call me 'li'le beauty,' an' put me wid my brudders an' sisters she pick up too; she say, 'Someting to 'member ole days by.'

"One day she make li'le hole in me—she do it so quick not hurt me bery much—an' den she string me on a chain eber so long, to hang round her neck. When she go 'board ship, she take us off and shut us up in a box, so I neber see notin' at all; sameting on shore, an' we at *home* ebery now an' den shut up in same box. I not see much ob de world arter all. Sometimes I tink ole tree not half such bad place as I usened to tink—plenty sunshine dere.

"But sometimes I too proud an' pleased; folks come up to my Missy an' dey say, 'What beautiful chain you got! dese beads *jet*, are dey not? (I larnt jet bery much tought of, cost plenty money), Missy gib li'le laugh an' say, 'No, dey be Soapberries.'

"She keep us careful, must say dat; she bery fond of us. On desideration, I happy li'le fellow, sartainly, in dose days.

"My Missy terrible fond o' readin' an' writin'. One day she sit bery toughtful, de pen dropped from her fingers, an' she looking

at her chain. I get quite close to her hand, an' I kiss it, an' I say, bery softly, 'Missy, wish you write li'le Soapberry's story.' She started, as if she kinder heard; a li'le smile passed over her face, but she not say notin'.

"Tree weeks ago Missy payin' visits wid de chain round her neck, it catch in some ting an' de 'tring broke—hi! we all fall down on de floor. I bery sorry, but yet I, wicked li'le fellow, I larf an' larf so, I not able to 'top larfin', while all de oders gettin' picked up. In de larfin' I roll away into de corner, an' nobody see me. I get kinder frightened den, but, oh, it too late. My own dear Missy an' me we parted den, neber, I 'fraid, to be togeder again! I see her go out of de door, an' my heart so big it like to break.

"Next mornin' de housemaid pick me up; but (she poor girl, she not know better) she handle me quite careless like. De friend of my Missy she spy me on de chimley piece, she put me in de pocket of her dress when she go to call upon my own Missy. I jump for joy, I so sure I goin' to get back to her again.

"Well, de friend talk an' talk till I quite

fretted she had so much conversation. At last she say, wid a mighty indifferent sort of a way, 'By-de-by, Zoe (dat i my own Missus' name), I found anoder of your Soapberries.'

"I 'prised her not take me out of her pocket to gib me back 'rectly (I'se of de 'pinion she kinder wanted to keep me, which bery unhandsome conduct in her, I 'sider); but oh, I neber so 'prised in all my life when I hear dese words come out of de mout of my bery own, own Missy: "'Neber mind, keep it, dear, if you like. I have plenty more.'

"I not say a word, but my feelins were bery much hurt, an' dere is times when I most obercome wid de tought of such want of 'sideration on Missy Zoe's part. But I not fret long. I say, 'Cheer up, li'le fellow, keep good heart—all come right in de end.' So I do what my new Missus tell me for do, and make no persistence when she 'tring me on to Missy Ribbon here, to make de 'Book-marker.'

"I dreadful curus to know what dat mean. Missy Ribbon 'plain it all to me; she been Book-marker 'fore now. She kinder 'shamed I not know how to read no more nor Missy

Jumbe an' Missy Nicker; but she tell us 'spose we let 'lone for a time, she teach us what de black letters all of dem mean. I glad for one ting;—'spose my own Missy go for write a book, I too sorry not to make out what him all about, and li'le black fellow neber forget ole friends; for sure he lub his own fust Missy till he dying day. I hab de honour now to wish de company farewell."

A little bye-play followed. The Queen was seen to bend down and whisper to the Paper-ticket on her dress, who responded only by a beseeching look. It appeared, therefore, that the desire expressed so early in the evening by the said little Paper-ticket was from no personal ambition of being herself the heroine of a story, but simply a wish that her numerous class should in their turn be represented.

After some consideration, the sceptre pointed to a Paper-ticket attached by a green silk cord to a book.

"'Ne'er a word I remin
"'An' what makes ye
so aisy?'
"'Shure it's the *mar*
a book could I ever get
but now it's as plaisant
duty to rade for an hour
duty to tell me how fur
It's no throuble in life
I put her, jist keepin'

"But it's little larn
yer honours will no
silves widout me tell
was all in the open
rain (it's not that
ould Ireland), the
lesson. A blessi
it's hard to say
them, for it's
heart-sick wid
"It's aisy
ha' took to
paper ye see
anything;
what's pla

XIV.

THE STORY OF A PAPER-TICKET.

"MAININ' me, my Lady? och but thin it's a pity yer honour's glory didn't ax some paper of English *distraction*, for it's jist Irish I am, an' in the ould counthry it's not so much the book larnin' that the likes of us takes to—what the French madmizell tould us about. Shure she's the clever craythur; a power o' larnin' has she at her fingers' ends, an' mighty improvin' no doubt it was to hear to her. Small blame to her for that same, seein' that some human craythurs jist look to her for tellin' 'em how fur they've got in their larnin'.

"Will I tell yer honours a story to prove it?"

"'An' whar have ye got in your book, Jack?' says Charlie.

"Jack whips up the book an' looks in, 'page 180,' says he.

"'It's not that I'm mainin' at all. It's what part o' the history have ye got to?'

"'Ne'er a word I remimber,' says Jack.

"'An' what makes ye say off the page thin so aisy?'

"'Shure it's the *marker* tells me. Sorra a book could I ever get to the end of before, but now it's as plaisant as can be. It's my duty to rade for an hour, an' it's the marker's duty to tell me how fur I get on wid my book. It's no throuble in life for her to lie still where I put her, jist keepin' the right place for me.'

"But it's little larnin' I have in mesilf, as yer honours will no doubt find out for yersilves widout me tellin'. What taichin' I got was all in the open air. The sunshine an' the *rain* (it's not that anyhow that's wantin' in ould Ireland), they larned me many a purty lesson. A blessing on them for that same; it's hard to say what I'ud ha' done widout them, for it's mesilf, ochone, that's been jist heart-sick wid the throuble an' the sorrow.

"It's aisy tellin' a dale o' sufferin' it must ha' took to convart me into the bit o' white paper ye see me now, as smooth an' as soft as anything; an' obadient to my duty to take what's plaised to put upon me—me, that

was wanst as wild a slip o' a flower as you'ud wish to see, dancin' i' the free air, wid the mischief an' the fun shinin' out o' my purty blue eyes.

"Will I tell yer honours o' my early days? Shure my life was jist the life of a girleen. Blessings be wid 'em purty darlints, the purtier they are the more sartain they are o' throuble o' one sort or another—it's mesilf that knows it—if it's not forgettin' my manners to spake so to yer honours. So long as I had the youth an' the beauty, my head was like to be turned wid the flattery I got. I'd lovers in plenty,—more nor I cared for at all, at all, save an' except the *one;* but that's nobody's saicret but my own.

"A dull sort o' a body was the Bee. I was jist deafened wid his hummin' an' buzzin' about me, tellin' me 'o' the comfortable house over my head' an' 'all sorts o' good things' I'd iver an' always have if I'ud belong to him. But it wasn't the likes o' that 'ud make me willin' to give up my free life in the open sunshiny air. So at last he got angered an' off he flew. Then came the Butterfly, grand as you plaise; but for all the fine colours an'

the gould he carried on his back, he wasn't the one I'd be content to make my masther.

"But the Birdeen's song was beautiful. Och but his voice was that sweet that I niver tired o' listenin', an' me listenin' was jist all he seemed to care for—till all at wanst—it's a saicret to me this day the why—but the Birdeen flew away. It's not the one she loves that the like o' a girleen lays her blame on. The Wind's known for a thraicherous body, carryin' folk's words to an' fro', mixin' the false wid the true, an' it might ha' been her mischief; but whether or no', wid lookin' for him that would never return, my purty blue eyes grew dim, an' I was jist blind wid the grief, ochone.

"It was thin I heard other voices that had been forenent me all the time swate an' low; but I'd been mindin' jist only the one. Och shure, but 'twas them were the good friends to me in my throuble. The Sunshine came about warm an' cheery, an' the silver-voiced Rain whisperin' so soft, her gentle words, like the chimin' o' tuneful bells.

"'It was jist the ould story,' said they, 'that was happenin' over an' over again since

the world began. An' jist put the desaver's song clane out o' yer head, acushla, an' listen to us, an' we'll tache you a betther song nor his. Do you think you were made but to listen to Butterflies, Bees, an' Birds? Not at all. You've got yer own duties to fulfil, for it's a fine name that's been given to you, an' shure you must live up to it, an' not be disgracin' yer family an' makin' a *Weed* o' yersilf. To look purty a while, an' thin die widout having been o' some use!—what's that but the life of a Weed? Yer purty blue eyes were jist the laste things you'd got to be proud of. By the same token, the name ye're called by amongst men is a grand name entirely, "Linum usitatissimum," or most useful Flax.'

"I laughed out at this, an' lifted up my head; for shure they discoorsed so kind.

"'An' it's plaisant, Mavourneen, to hear the sound o' yer laughin' again,' says they; 'for there's a long life of usefulness forenent you. It's a dale the humans think of you, or it's not in big ships they 'ud be bringin' yer seeds from across the wather,—Riga, a province in Roosha; an' ever so long agone, from a place

called Egypt. But you'll have seeds o' yer own, my darlint; and of great use they'll be to mankind. Linenseed, or Linseed, said they (jist pat wid the names like a printed book, for shure there's few things the Sun an' the Rain don't know),—'some will be made into oil for printers' an' painters' use, an' some will be for medicine to help the docthors to hale the sick.'

"'To think o' that, the tiny craythurs!' said I; 'an' that's good hearin' for me.'

"'But that's not all,' continued my taichers; 'you're called *Flax* now, but when you come to be *Linen*,—och, but it's the grand part you'll play in the world.'

"'What's that?' says I, as make as a child in its class at school.

"'What is it not?' answered they, chimin' in together; 'you'll see, little Flax.'

"'Och, bother, tell me,' says I, gettin' raither onpatient.

"'Shure, thin, we will,' says they, 'for there's a dale more throuble forenent you yet, Mavourneen, an' maybe 'twill put the brave heart in you to bear up against it, if you know the good that's in store for you at the last.'

"Throth, they were wonderful things they tould me!—how the big ships couldn't cross the sae widout the white wings that the Flax would give to them. Delicate plant, as I looked, my fibres, they said, were a miracle for strength, for all they could be spun as fine as a cobweb. 'Deed, 'twas a wondher to hear to them tellin' how that the sails of a great man-of-war, and the lace-veil of a purty bride, were jist one an' the other conjured (one may say) out of the green stalks of plants like me-silf. An' more nor this, they tould me that men, women, an' childer looked to us for the softest, an' whitest, an' plaisantest garments they wore,—more useful to them than silk.

"'For,' said they, 'it's jist from the cradle to the grave they're wantin' you,—the Cambric web for the babe an' the Linen shroud for the corpse.'

"'I'm behoulden to them, no doubt, for the honour they do us,' said I, my voice in a tremble o' fear; 'but I'd jist be content wid clothing the babbies, an' laive the wrappin' the dead to Silk or Cotton, whichever they plaise.'

"'O little Flax,' said the Sun, with a graver voice, 'fear not; the brown seed from

which you yourself have sprung was buried in the ground. The coffins of men crumble into dust, but all that they contain shall one day again see the light.'

"It's well for me that I had such friends to taich me afore the throuble came, which it did very soon. Yer blood would run could to hear all I went through, wid the human craythurs convartin' the fibres of my stalks into Linen thread. The women an' the childer', they pulled me up aisy; but thin wid iron combs they tore off my leaves an' my purty brown seeds. For weeks I was drowned in wather; more dead nor alive I laid for a time on the fresh grass; and thin in a 'Brake Machine' wid iron jaws, I was bruised past tellin'—the evil craythur champin' me as a horse champs his bit. A hideous thing they called a 'Heckle,' wid terrible rows of iron teeth, was in waitin' for some poor Flax; bu. mesilf it was, scraped I was wid a blunt knife on soft leather, to part my fibres an' make them spin aisy.

"Thin came the mill, where the wet was flyin' like rain from the whirrin' wheels that

were served by childer', an' there I was spun into the cobweb thread my taichers tould me about.

"Wanst on a time 'twas the women wid spinnin'-wheels by their firesides, or their cottage doors, an' great ladies, too, in their castle halls, that spun all the thread, which for fineness bate all other—36,000 yards from a pound of Flax! But human hands could only spin one thread at a time; the great giant Steam, that nobody sees, who works like a slave in a prison, wid rattlin' o' chains about him, has iron arms widout number; an' he can spin, not one, but 2000 threads at a time!

"What's to come next? thought I, as I lay wanst more on the cool green grass; an' I fairly bothered mesilf wid balancin' the good an' the ill o' the various sarvices I'd been tould that man required of us Linens!

"While dhramin' o' grand days to come, I clane forgot my ould friends forenent me agin.

"'Mavourneen,' says the Rain, spakin' soft as if I'd been her darter, 'an' whare's the need of frettin' yersilf as to what you'ud like to be? Shure that will be ordhered for you. It's for you but to make up yer mind to be content

wid it. To my thinkin' it's jist a piece of fine Cambric you'll be.'

"An' so it turned out. Wanst more through a mill, the weavers' shuttles flew, an' the warp an' the weft were made one; an' sune I lay on the bleachin' ground, a delicate web of Cambric. Fine times were those, wid a 'colleen oge,' * who'd ever the song on her purty red lips, to wather me by day, an' a four-footed baste, like a lion, to guard me by night, for I was of great value now. An' so afther a time, wid blessins an' good words, I said good-bye to my taichers.

"Afther crossin' the wather to England, the first thing I remimber was me thinkin' I'd got to the Queen's palace, God bless her! but no, 'twas a shop! an iligant place entirely; shure a power o' fine things was there. I was proud to belong to ye Mister Howelanjames.

"Afther all the bruisin' an' batin' I'd had, you'll wondher to hear I was jist as consated a piece of Cambric as I'd been a consated Flower. But, ochone! the French Cambric for beauty an' fineness bate all! an' always the cry was

* Pretty girl.

for 'French Cambric,' an' niver a word for the Irish! Says I, to mesilf, (jist grumblin' agin, you see) an' what's the use of plantin', an' pullin' us up, an' 'rettin,' an' 'brakin,' an' spinnin', an' weavin' us Irish Cambric, if nobody's wantin' us at all—when one day, as I lay disconsilate on the counther, I heard the swatest o' voices say,—

"'Not French, I'd rather have *Irish.*'

"I could scarcely believe my ears.

"'Irish! my dear?' says the ould lady, 'why not have French?' 'Irish is the cheapest, mamma!' said the beautiful young craythur; but the sparkle o' mischief in her eye an' the frown on the mother's face, showed to me that the thrue raison that made her choose me was a saicret.

"So I became a Hankercher, an' 'Blanche' was put in one corner, in iligant needlework; an' my life was jist a dhrame o' delight. 'Twas a rale joy to be held now an' thin wid a dainty hould by my misthress' lily-like hand, an' at other times I lay like a Princess in a bed o' blue sattin, perfumed wid the swatest o' scents. When, all ón a sudden, one day as my misthress lifted me up to her face, I was

wetted as if wid drops o' rain; but it wasn't rain, but what the humans call 'tears.'

"I wondhered if they, too, had the silver voice an' the kind taichin' of the Rain o' the skies, an' I wished wid all my heart that they might have; for my beautiful misthress grew sorrowful, an' the roses died out o' her cheeks. An' I heard there was fightins abroad, an' he she loved best must go off to the war; an' because she was rich, an' the sodger officer was poor, she wasn't to be let to become his wife. He was *Irish*, an' that was why the purty craythur liked '*chape*' Cambric, as she jist liked everything that came from *his* counthry.

"Och, but that was the dhrary winter—when the hunger, an' the could, an' the sickness was killin' the brave boys in the Chramea, —what the guns and the baggonets of the Rooshans didn't kill. An' '*what could they do for the poor sodgers?*' was the cry that rang through the three kingdoms; an' Miss Blanche, you'll be shure, was not behind hand. Wid a prayer that her darlin' might never need sich, her own purty fingers made up for the wounded all manner o' bandages o' Linen

an' Cambric; an' though not to say ould, I was sent wid the others.

"A pitiful sight, an' yet 'twas a proud one, in the hospital wards at Scootary, to see the brave boys that forenent the inimy had been bould as lions now patient as lambs in their beds o' sufferin'. The one longin' they had was for news from home. My heart was jist broke wid the sorrow I saw, an' had no power to hale; when one day hangin' from the nurse's hand, as she stood by the bedside of a wounded man, on a sudden I saw the red come back to his cheek an' the sparkle o' light to his eye. An' on the instant I forgave the humans all the torments they'd put upon me, for shure 'twas *mesilf* an' no other that (under God's blessin') gave back the life to the fine young officer, for he'd spied the name 'Blanche' on the corner!

"He catched me out o' the nurse's hand an' kissed me a hundred times over, an' he iver an' always vowed that the Hankercher had made a well man of him, more nor all the docther's stuff could do. An' shure 'twas the turn o' his luck,—from that hour he mended; an' when he came home the medals an' rib-

bons he'd won, wid Victoria's Cross on the top of all, fairly outweighed the ould gentleman's gould, an' Blanche was to be his wife.

"You may think how much they all made of me! an' the captain vowed he'd never part wid me! But, ochone! one day he was carryin' me in his pocket to show to one of the bridemaids that was to be, when a rogue whipped me out; an' the captain all onaware. A terrible downcome was that for me, speshially thin, when who sich a darlint as I? Troth, I was fairly heart-sick, an' dazed wid the throuble. The onconscionable villain that stealed me jist counted me as a *rag*—wid the tears and the kisses I was mostly worn out—that's thrue!

"An' thin comes the last tale o' sufferin' I'll be throublin' yer honours wid. In a heap of ould rags I was carried to a sorting-room, where a woman sorted us according to our quality. I heard her say she could sort a hunderweight of rags in a day.

"The taichin' of other days came to my remimbrance, when it seemed to me mighty hard, that wid as much pains as they'd taken to put my threads together, they now tried to

tear 'em asundher. For puttin' me into a machine full of wather, what they called 'cylinders,' wid sharp cutters rowlin' round an' round, soon made of me jist a mass of pulp. The monster machine 'twould ha' skeared you to hear it, gratin' an' growlin' all the time. Wid one set of iron teeth he'd make 60,000 cuts in a minute, wid another set 180,000!

"'Tis a wondher to me this minute that wid sic tratement there was anything left at all at all of us unfortinate rags! More dead nor alive, I remimber, as if in an ugly dhrame, they poured the soft pulp I'd become into a mould of wire-cloth. When the wather was out of me I was pressed between sheets of Felt, an' thin I was let alone for a bit. By the same token, strange stories were tould to me by that same Felt.

"So what was I now but a sheet of *Paper?*

"But Writing-paper it was that I was to be, an' as smooth as sattin. So, behould, a tub of a nasty mixture called Size, an' they dipped me into that,—and thin I was to be dried again, an' be pressed upon wid hot an' heavy weights.

"Says I to mesilf, an' whin will they let

me alone? Shure the humans don't know themselves what they'ud be at! wid their tearin' asundher an' puttin' together! wid all their wettins an' dryins.

"But it seems, afther all, they did know, an' ha' done far betther for me than I could ha' done for mesilf,—for it's jist a great rise in the world I have had from a Hankercher rag to a piece of Paper!

"As Cambric in mesilf I was happy enough, an' great luck I had in makin' Miss Blanche an' her lover happy; but as Paper, now to be written upon, wid words o' blessin' may be! shure the good I *may* do is past tellin'."

Like Erin's own representative, with "a tear and a smile in her eye," the Queen affectionately expressed the interest she had felt in the story of the little Flax-plant's changeful life; then raising her sceptre, she pointed with it to the *Book*, to which the Paper-ticket of Irish "*distraction*" was attached.

The Book instantly rose. After making a respectful obeisance to her Majesty, looking upon his Paper-ticket with an expression of peculiar friendliness, he first addressed himself to her, beginning thus:—

XV.

THE STORY OF A BOOK.

"DEAR little friend, if every one here present could, from the various stories we have heard to-night, carry away but one recollection, I would that it could be the one suggested by the conclusion of yours. It is a lesson we must all have already learned, more or less, but we cannot learn it too well.

"In being fitted and prepared for the several duties required of us, how many of the sufferings we have endured have seemed to us needless and hard to bear! Yet already glimpses of the absolute necessity of them have dawned upon some of us, and we can think of the past with no bitterness, and look to the future with no fear.

"What courage, what joy, can be like those inspired by an unfailing trust in the superior wisdom and love which shapes our course and appoints our destinies? If in any degree the

past or the present has made this known to us, shall we venture to feel distrust in times to come?

"Indeed I do not wish to sermonize, but, dear young things, with whom life is but beginning, you cannot know how anxiously and lovingly your untried steps are watched by those who have had more experience of life. Not that I can myself claim reverence on the score of a venerable antiquity, as the peerless Diamond may."

Here there was a sly attempt made, by those nearest to him, to peep into the title-page of the Book; but it was fast shut,—neither name nor date was visible.

The Book good-humouredly smiled at the baffled inquirers, and continued,—

"But at least I have seen more of the world than some to whom I am speaking, and gladly would I, if possible, save any 'little one' from thoughts or words of repining and discontent. If you care for nothing else in my story, oh remember, I pray, the lessons of Faith, Hope, and Love, that not only the printed words of a Book repeat, but of which even the materials that compose it are eloquent. My story thus

begun in Faith and Hope will surely end in Love.

"Little ones, I was once as merry and thoughtless as yourselves. A grave and dignified Book as perhaps I appear to you, I too was "*wanst a wild slip o' a Flower.*" The dear little Paper-ticket and myself have many memories in common. Like discipline, like destinies have been appointed to us. Substances supplying men's bodily wants have, singularly, been chosen to minister also to his mental need.

"Linen and Cotton both become Paper.

"But we began life very differently, and in very dissimilar circumstances have the same grand truths been taught us both.

"Our appointed missions being alike to become clothing and paper, yet compare for an instant my early recollections with those of Flax.

"You have, as it were, beheld the delicate plant, with narrow dark green leaves and clustering flowers of tender blue, mirrored in the sparkling rivulet, showing to herself how fair she was. And then in her sorrow you have seen her comforted by the fresh, cool

showers that give Ireland's turf its emerald hue.

"Now look to the banks of one of the noble rivers of South America. The British flag floats over Demerara, so fear not to hear the voice of 'LEGREE' if we enter a *Cotton plantation* there. Will you think me vain if I tell you what I have heard human beings say?—that it is hard to say when Cotton looks loveliest; when the low shrubby plants are sheeted with blossoms of pale gold, with central spots of rich purple; or when the flowers are gone, and the harvest of down is ready. The seed-pods then bursting, show countless silky globes, contrasting their pure white with the dark and glossy green of their leaves.

"Picking Cotton is not hard work, and the merry laugh and endless songs of the childlike blacks accompany what may be called the shearing of the tree-lambs, which in Guiana takes place twice in the year.

"I bear not so proud a name as the 'most useful' Flax. Our family's earliest name, 'Tree-wool,' given to us by the ancient Greeks, and yet preserved to us in Germany, is also the most significant. For like the soft fleece of

a lamb is the downy white lining of the pod in which are enveloped shining black seeds. They, like the Linen seeds, are converted into oil, which is frequently used for burning, the residue is food for cattle. Our seeds are also medicinal, and the soft Cotton wool is well known for its healing properties.

"Our name of Gossypium is not commonly used; but from the Arab word 'Kutun,' came that which is best known, *Cotton*, millions of bales of which come from all quarters of the world to little England, where, by her superior machinery, the raw material can, under one roof, in ten days be converted into cloth.* And while so swift and so untiring are the fingers of the 'iron man,' so delicate also is their touch, that from a pound of Cotton they can spin 238 miles, 1120 yards of thread!

"The natives of India, who from earliest antiquity were Cotton manufacturers, and who, in the seventh century, supplied the Arabian merchants with the Cotton fabrics so eagerly purchased by Europe, now, in the nineteenth

* Singhalese traditions, however, tell that for the robes of the Buddhist priests "cotton was picked at sunrise, cleansed, spun, woven, dyed yellow, made into garments, and presented before sunrise."—*Tennent's Ceylon.*

century, themselves delight in Cottons of English manufacture.

"From the gardens of China, where we were long cultivated only as an ornamental shrub, the Arabs carried our plants to Mecca. Borne onward by them in their career of conquest, the lands they subdued they also enriched with us, and with many another precious seed.

"The little Flax can boast herself of her veritable picture guarded throughout long centuries by the mighty dead of the Egyptian Pyramids, swathed as they also were in her Linen cloths; and I too would fain tell you of the reverence paid to us in various parts of the world. In India, at Saharunpore, the 'Tree-cotton' is considered sacred, and is never woven but for coverings for the head. In Africa, the negroes of Guinea pay homage to the 'wild Cotton' of their land.

"Myself a native of the new world, I would remind you that it also claims us as its own from earliest times. The noble Aztec race that drank of *Chocolate*, were clothed in *Cotton*.

"From my early home on the banks of the

sunlit waters of the Demerara River, I crossed the wide Atlantic in the shape of a Cotton bale, to fulfil my appointed destiny.

"On the weaver's shuttle I flew through the shifting warp, but no dainty web was I. A squalid girl, with hot and hasty hands, fashioned me into the homely shirt, which should bring her a few half-pence, poor child, to purchase a crust of bread. When old age crept over me, and even my stout fabric became a rag, once more were the destinies of Linen and Flax assimilated. Iron teeth champed me into a mass of pulp, from which I, too, was made into Paper, though of a different kind. The delicate Cambric became the satiny Writing Paper, but the Cotton rag was only fit for one of the various descriptions of Printing Paper.

"Did I say '*only?*'—oh! where is there a nobler destiny? In truth, the possible vastness of my mission overwhelms me with a sense of unfitness. Like my wise little friend with the busy ever-moving hands, I feel it impossible to do justice to my theme.

"Simply to tell you how I became a Book were quickly done, though many a Book before

me will have told of this far better than I can do; but beyond the actual making of a Book, its printing and its binding,—how wide a field of interest unfolds itself!

"*Paper*, of which one hundred millions of pounds may be reckoned as rather under than over the quantity manufactured in our own little isles — in that word alone how immeasurably vast a source for imagination and reflection!

"As *Writing Paper*, entering into every detail of the home life and public life of man!—ah! what romance, and yet, in fact, realities of life, are contained in those huge letter-bags that continually travel from street to street, from town to town, from one quarter of the globe to another, big with the fate of individuals and of empires!

"As *Printed Paper*—Newspapers and Books! the influence of such messengers of good or evil is multiplied a thousand-fold.

"The fair white sheet, shall it glow as with living gems? shall it be glorious as the stars, the Christian poet's inspired words as heavenly lamps lighting up some weary wanderer's path? On it, as in letters of gold, shall a

'Psalm of Life' go forth, and the shining lines be passed, like Clan-Alpine's fiery Cross, from hand to kindred hand—enkindling the zeal of all—till in the Battle of Life the true-hearted lead the van? Or shall evil words, like birds of night, with a haunting horror darken the page, and do the great Tempter's hideous work?

"With such an alternative think you, dear friends, that any one can overrate the influence of Printed Paper on the destinies of men?

"But in speaking of Paper and Books, would the little ones like to know upon what materials the Picture Alphabets of the young world were traced? Flat stones and Babylonian bricks remain to tell us that. Waxed wood, and plates of metal and ivory were also used; and skins of animals, and leaves of trees.

"Still in the East the royal Palm-tree holds her own, and Christians now trace blessed truths on the 'Talipot' leaves, even as centuries ago the priests of Buddha with iron pen impressed on them their mystic characters, existing still.

"The oldest Books of the Word of Life were written on skins of animals. Christians

might see therein a strange significance as connected with the typical sacrifices of old.

"About two centuries before the Christian era, King Eumenes of Pergamos invented a preparation for skins, making them into Parchment, as a substitute for the already failing supply of the Egyptian Papyrus. The substitute has outlived its renowned predecessor, and still on Parchment men write their most valuable records.

"Some centuries ago it was so precious that old writings were often erased from Parchments, so that they might receive fresh writing.

"In the eleventh century, some monks besought that a present to their convent of costly plate might be exchanged for a few skins of the invaluable material, by means of which good words might be preserved and multiplied. See now in English village schools, how the poorest lad lacks not his copy-book. At the present day old Parchments, it is said, are converted by the French into ladies' gloves.

"But the green-flowered water-plant, the Papyrus of Egypt, claims a more ancient date. That fragile pith-like lining of the reedy stem,

how has it outlived successive empires, the records of whose glories were written upon it! For so long time sharing the gloomy fate of Egyptian Linen mummy-cloths, Papyrus-rolls have been disentombed bearing date B.C. 640. Joined together with the utmost ingenuity, some of these rolls measure ten yards in length.

"The Egyptians also wrote on prepared Linen. See how old fashions revive,—Nursery Books are printed on Linen now.

"As the leaves of the Palm-tree were written upon with a sort of bodkin or iron 'stylus,' so on the inner bark of the Bamboo did the Chinese write. To them is traced the invention of *Paper* made from rags of Cotton and Linen, from refuse Silk, and Rice straw. Papyrus, which had been for so long the messenger of men's thoughts, and the material most prized for writing upon, gave its name to its successor, as the Leaf of a Book derived its name from the Leaf of a Tree,—those gloriously leaved Books, ever open and intelligible to all, written upon by an Almighty Hand, in the universal language of Love!

"As with most of her manufactures, Spain, the pupil of her Mohammedan masters, was taught by the Moors the art of making Paper from Linen, Cotton, and Hempen rags, as they had early learned it from the Chinese. It was not till the fourteenth century that Nuremberg made Paper from Linen; and slowly did the manufacture make its way into England, which for many years was dependent on other countries. The first English Paper-mill was set up at Dartford, in Queen Elizabeth's time.

"In the seventeenth century Fuller quaintly discovered, in the various Papers imported into Great Britain, the characteristics of the several people by whom they were made:—Venetian, light and subtle; French, light; Dutch, thick and corpulent. Now all that England need import are rags; but foreign rags, though greatly inferior to our own in cleanliness, are amongst the most difficult of merchandise to procure; and countries that are eager to send us rich velvets and brocades, jealously guard the export of their rags.

"Paper has been made from various other vegetable fibres—from the inner bark of various

trees, the stalks of the nettle, thistle, and mallow, the tendrils of the vine, the bind of the hop, and wheaten straw, which last is increasing in favour. But Linen and Cotton rags outmatch all other materials. The sweepings of Cotton-mills have in a few years made Paper-makers rich; and there are many buyers for the '*Cotton-waste*,' of which Great Britain is said to produce annually fifty thousand tons.

"Marvellous is the Paper-making machine, by which the liquid pulp entering in at one side is, in the space of two or three minutes, delivered out at the other extremity of the machine in the state of perfect Paper.

"Will you think, my friends, that I say it because I am a Book, or rather, will you not agree with me that it is passing strange, that with all their untiring energy and ceaseless discoveries, man did not sooner invent the art of Printing?

"In convent cells how many a patient monk has passed his long, unchequered, solitary life in copying and recopying, with infinite labour, sometimes even with sacrifice of sight, the precious tomes which the mighty Printing

Press of our day can in a few hours multiply a thousand fold.

"In Wycliffe's day a manuscript Bible cost £30. It has been calculated, from a working man's wages at that time, that it would have taken him fifteen years to save up such a sum;* and now a shilling buys the 'volume without price.'

"How slowly progressive was the art of giving to inanimate things the power of entering the eye-gate of knowledge!

"It seems strange that the ancient use of seals from engraved gems did not earlier suggest to European nations some such approach to the art of Printing as had long been practised in China. In the thirteenth century, Marco Polo brought from thence Paper money stamped with a seal, and coloured with vermilion.

"Pictured cards were the next step, then prayers on cards. Early in the fifteenth century Holland produced "Block Books,"—small folios of forty leaves with pictures and Scripture texts.

"In Germany arose the art of printing from movable types. Guttenberg of Strasbourg

* The Book and its Story, p. 133.

expended the whole of his fortune in trying to perfect his invention. He was about to abandon the good work in despair when the goldsmith, Faust of Mentz, brought money and ingenuity to his assistance. To these benefactors of mankind was soon added a third—Schoeffer, the servant of Faust, who perfected the casting of the types in copper and tin, which had been originally of wood. His grateful master bestowed on him his daughter in marriage.

"In connection with an art which should have such incalculable influence on mankind, significant was the maiden's name thus given in reward to the first founder of types, for it was *Christina.*

"The first printed Book was ten years in preparation, and the setting up of the first four sheets cost 4000 florins.

"This Book,—one of the copies of which, printed in vellum, was sold about thirty years ago for £500,—was a Latin copy of the Bible. It had no date, but it is said to have been completed before 1455.*

* *Vide* "The Book and its Story," for this notice, and an interesting detailed account of printing, binding, &c.

"For some time the new art was kept secret. Our English Caxton, who introduced it into England in the year 1474, is believed to have learned it in Holland. To the martyr Tyndale was given the honour of printing the first English Bible,—but not on his native shores. The precious sheets were sent over from Germany, where he had sought refuge from his persecutors. Brought back to England to die, his ashes became as precious seed bringing forth 'good fruit an hundred-fold.' To his chained Bible wings have been given, and from a small house in London it now flies abroad into all corners of the earth, printed in one hundred and fifty different languages!

"Truly has it been said that 'Rubies,' 'Pearls,' and 'Diamonds' are significant names for the infinitely precious types which spread abroad amongst men treasures beyond count, and that fade not away.

"But slowly the giant grew to whom was to be given tongues without number; three hundred and fifty years passed on ere the original wooden press was succeeded by one of iron. And then again a pause—before the Saxon clockmaker, König, gave to the world

his *kingly* gift of the steam-impelled Printing Press, which counts the impressions it casts off in an hour, not by hundreds, but by thousands.

"It was at a Paper-making mill in the Midland counties that I became Paper. My eagerness to assume a form so important carried me unmurmuringly through the painful process by which discoloured rags are converted into clean white Paper.

"I had been forewarned of the several changes I should undergo; for I also had my heavenly teachers appointed, as they are to every living thing. But it was in the Sunbeam's lessons of light that my blossoms of paly gold delighted most; to us the Rain but seldom spoke in the silvery accents heard by the delicate Flax. To supply the moisture which, in our southern climes, is so needed by the hot earth and thirsty trees and flowers, she rushes like a torrent from the skies, and in such haste that our beautiful petals are sometimes beaten to the earth.

"As the especial child of the gladsome Sun, I learned from him to take a cheery view of life, and my mottoes were, 'Onward' and

'Excelsior.' Even in my worst days, as a hardly used Cotton shirt, I never felt long depressed. From the garret window where, in an atmosphere of soot and dirt, I was hung out to dry after my too unfrequent washings, how wonderingly I gazed upon the metamorphose of my beloved teacher! The dull crimson globe that hung as it seemed so low in the leaden-coloured sky of the great metropolis, I could scarcely at first believe was in very truth the same effulgent orb which in my native clime blazed gloriously on high, so that no human eye could venture but for an instant to look upon his dazzling splendour.

"But when I was assured that he was the same,—shall I then complain, thought I, if my days are sometimes dull and overclouded too? and I learned to look beyond the present hour.

"At length my longings were fulfilled. I began as Paper a new life, and my next desire was to become a Book. It was with rapture, therefore, that I heard the order given that I should be dispatched to a celebrated printing establishment at ——.

"In this establishment, at early morn, before

head or hands began their work, the voice of prayer went up to the Throne of God, from all the workmen united there, to ask his blessing on the labours of the day.

"You may be sure I had now no fear that unmeet words might sully my fair white sheets. Even as Blank Paper, I made pleasant acquaintance with some excellent Books, and I longed to be, as I heard was the case with many of them, received with affectionate welcome into many houses.

"Left for a day or two in the compositors' room, I watched with eager interest the first steps towards printing a Book. I saw the page of manuscript or 'copy' laid on a desk. I wondered what would be the nature of the one assigned to me. I saw the compositor hold in his left hand the 'composing-stick,' which is a brass frame with a movable side, while with his right hand he rapidly selected the types of the letters he wanted as they lay before him in separate compartments of his desk. When the stick was filled, he grasped the whole of the types contained in it, and transferred them to a larger frame, which, when completed, would form a sheet, contain-

ing from four to sixty-four pages, according to the size of the Book. A 'proof-sheet' being taken off in the room by means of a hand-press, any mistake was seen at once and corrected.

"The types having been prepared for me, I was now to be prepared for receiving the impression of the types, by being passed through a bath of cold water; for unless the Paper were moist the print would not be very legible.

"And now approached the moment so eagerly longed for, when the power of communicating the thoughts of one human being to the minds of others was to be bestowed upon me. I was taken to the room where the monster Steam Press, surrounded by smaller ones, carried on its mighty and untiring work.

"A huge Machine it seemed to me—two enormous cylinders, one great wheel, and many smaller ones. How admirably was each part adapted for the duty assigned to it! At one end was the reservoir of ink, a thick composition of lamp black and linseed oil—of this only a touch was necessary to blacken the types. The operation was effected by means of two sets of 'inking rollers,' composed of treacle

and glue. One set of these rollers, by an instantaneous contact with the reservoir, received the ink and supplied it to the 'inking-table,' which in its turn communicated it to the other set of rollers passing over the forms of type. By the constant travelling backward and forward of the apparatus, this operation of inking was continuous, and so rapid that the whole was accomplished in the sixteenth part of a minute.

"The Machine being set in motion had already inked the types for their first impression, and now a boy rapidly laid my first sheet on one of the large revolving cylinders, and in less than three seconds I was printed on both sides.

"Clasped to each of the cylinders in succession by means of tapes, the sheet being reversed by the action of smaller rollers, both sides of the Paper were pressed on their respective forms of type. The monster Machine, impelled by steam, asked only the aid of one little lad to lay upon it the blank sheet, and that of another to remove it after it had been endowed with, as it were, a living voice. After my printed sheets had been dried and pressed

between sheets of heated iron, I was taken to an upper room, where, by the hands of women and young girls, I was folded according to the number of pages contained in my sheet—a signature letter at the bottom of each sheet guiding them as to the succession of those sheets.

"By the hands of women also the twisted strings and tapes were attached to the back of the folded sheets, by means of which they were joined together. Each completed volume was then put into a press of great power, where, by a cutting instrument, the rough edges of the leaves were made perfectly smooth.

"And now an outer garment only was wanting to make the finished Book.

"Amongst some Oriental nations still, as in days of old, Bookbinding is unknown. The Palm leaves, or the slips of Vellum, are strung together on silken cords; or they are joined to make one long long sheet, and this is attached at each end to rollers clasped with silver or gold, and often adorned with precious stones.

"But when Parchment or Vellum (calfskin) was so prepared as to receive writing on both

sides, the folded sheets suggested the present form of Bookbinding.

"In the 'Scriptorium' (writing-room), usually attached to monasteries, beside the patient monks who carefully produced page after page of 'Black-letter,' or who with gold and gorgeous colours emblazoned the borders and initial letters, sat also those who devoted themselves to the art of suitably binding together those precious leaves.

"A Book of Psalms in Latin and Saxon, of the ninth century, still in existence, is the earliest specimen known of English Bookbinding. Its clumsy oaken boards, with bosses of brass at the corners are rudely stitched together at the back with leathern thongs.

"Compare with this, I pray you, the Book-covers presented to our Queen Victoria by the Emperor of Austria, on the occasion of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Most exquisitely carved in ivory and set with precious stones, they were amongst the choicest treasures in that palace of wonders.

"But Book-covers of such magnificence are more rarely to be seen now than they were in the centuries immediately succeeding their first

introduction. Highly honoured also were the earlier proficients in the art. On a skilful bookbinding monk named Herman, who came to England at the time of the Norman Conquest, was bestowed the bishopric of Salisbury.

"When the hand-written Book was the labour of a life-time, what covering could be found for it too rich and rare? A Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth was bound in solid gold, and hung by a golden chain to her girdle. But in the reign of Edward III. a volume was beheld more resplendent still! Its cover of enamelled gold had on one side a glittering cross in diamonds, and on the other a diamond Fleur-de-lis; its clasp was a precious ruby; and its jewelled pendant, or book-marker, sparkled with white sapphires.

"Rarely now do men adorn with precious stones the covers of their Books; too numerous are the children of the Printing Press for such wealth to be lavished on their outer garments. Yet dainty bindings are still to be seen—silks and velvets of richest hues, costly leathers of fragrant smell, adorned with exquisite designs in gold and various colours. Sometimes, too, old fashions are revived, and covers are made

of carved oak, of ivory, and ebony, clasped and bound with silver or gold.

"But the especial triumph of Bookbinders of the present day is in the neatness, cheapness, and marvellous despatch of their workmanship. The 'Slave of the Lamp,' ubiquitous Steam, here as everywhere performs wonders while submitting himself to man's direction. In London, the binding of 5000 volumes can be completed in two days; and if the cloth covers are ready prepared, 1000 volumes can be bound in six hours.

"But see, time presses. Already have I lingered too long. Much must be left unsaid; yet ere we part I would plead for the remembrance of the sweet lesson that has again and again peeped out from each of the stories of our varied lives.

"All things having been created by Infinite Wisdom and Love, have their especial use; and to every individual, great and small, old and young, some work is ever assigned. Happiest those who make of theirs a 'labour of love.'

"'Ready, aye ready,' be, then, the motto of us all; for we know not what may be required of us. With most of us Life is only just be-

ginning; and none of us can say our work is finished.

"My dear little Paper-ticket and all her fair sisters, do they know that for them and for me there is yet another phase of existence in which we may again do good service to mankind?

"Yes, little Flax," said the Book, looking affectionately towards her, but with something of sadness in his faltering tone, "should our bright dreams of extended usefulness as Writing Paper and as Printed Book be unfulfilled, yet even then, though the sad words '*Waste Paper*' be applied to us, we still may be not worthless!

"The ingenuity of men have led them to learn one lesson at least from the grand economy of Nature, which was once divinely enforced. The discoveries of every day are unfolding it more and more: 'Let nothing be lost.'

"You and I, dear Flax, again reduced to pulp, may be joined together at last, and become what has been named 'Papier-Maché.'

"As such we should be moulded into various forms, and perhaps be adorned with brilliant

colours. Stained black, we may be richly painted upon. It is not impossible but that we may receive the very representations of what we were in our earliest days,—the delicate Flax with its eyes of blue, and the Cotton with blossoms of palest gold.

"Fashioned we may be into some dainty toy, gilded and studded with mother-of-pearl; or form, perhaps, a casket to hold jewels of inestimable value.

"Or for us a yet nobler destiny may be reserved!

"Near Bergen, in Norway, a church has been built to contain a thousand persons. It is walled, and roofed, and ceiled with Papier-Maché; its pillars and its statues are of the same material. It is made water-proof, and nearly fire-proof.

"As trusty pillar or unshaken wall it may be our lot, dear little Flax, to be thus built into a house of God; or in the delicately wrought spire uprising from its tower, kissed by the sunlight of other days, we may be as the golden sceptre was in the hands of the Eastern king of old, bidding all who have aught to ask draw near to a hallowed place of

prayer,—or, silvered by the glistening rain, be as an angel's wand to the way-worn pilgrims of earth, pointing to the home of the blessed above."

A grave silence followed for a few seconds, and then a low whispering began.

"What's the name of the Book?"

"I wonder he didn't tell us his name."

"We'll get his little Paper-ticket to ask him,—he'd be sure to tell her."

The Book, who could not but hear this whispering around him, smiled, but rather nervously, and said—

"I thought if I were worth anything as a Book, you might perhaps hear of my name. But see, you can read it now if you like." And he raised himself so that the firelight might shine on his letter back; but ere he could turn quite round, the *boatswain's whistle was heard!*

All started! The Book fell back into its place, saying hurriedly, "I shall hope to be able to see you all next year!"

The pretty Mother-of-pearl Penholder stretched out her white arm imploringly to the

silver-winged Fairies, who instantly obeyed the signal, and restored her safely to her original place, and—silence fell upon all.

And now the sound of many feet approaching was distinctly heard, while high above all rang out the noisy shouts and pealing laughter of merry children eagerly rushing up the great staircase. But a pause ensued—a hand was on the lock of the door, and Ida Mowbray's sweet voice was heard—

"No, no; wait for a little, please; you mustn't all come in till after the Tree is lighted up—only just a very few now, to help me. Come, Rose, Reynold, Bessie, Louis—Geraldine and Alicia, can you come? Not you, little Helena; stay with Mabel and Josephine, and we will be ready in two minutes."

The chosen little band was increased by a few more gentlemen volunteers, who assured the pretty Ida that the lighting of the Tree should be left to them, and by no means be attempted by ladies with their hanging sleeves. They entered the room, and very rapidly the lighting of wax tapers and lamps went on amid exclamations of delight and admiration,

every additional light adding to the beautiful effect of the really magnificent Tree.

The Amber-coloured Lamp was so excited at the realization of his anticipated glorification, that he gave a fizz and caper of delight as the match was applied to him. Poor thing! his exultation had nearly proved fatal to his hopes; for the gentleman quietly remarking, "This Lamp does not seem likely to burn well," was about to remove him, to be replaced by another; but the little fellow quickly perceiving that he must now be on his best behaviour, as the superior race with whom he had to do would "stand no nonsense," dropped down directly into the quietest of flames, and burned soberly and steadily for the rest of the evening.

The Tree was now lighted, and Ida and her friends standing on one side, the door was thrown open, and tumultuously the whole party burst into the room.

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